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LORD KITCHENER

A photograph taken during the Great War

LORD KITCHENER

by
ARTHUR HODGES

With a Foreword by
FIELD-MARSHAL SIR WILLIAM BIRDWOOD
G.C.B., G.C.M.G. etc.

"The moving finger writes ; and having writ, moves on"



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P R E F A C E

CERTAIN partisan writers on public affairs have given the impression that at the time of Lord Kitchener's death he was finished physically and mentally and that his usefulness as a public servant was at an end. These writings, which loom large in the public eye, have tended to develop a legend with regard to him which is quite erroneous. In the long run this is really not of very great importance because historical characters usually come into their own in the end, but so far he has found few champions. Aside from the works of Sir George Arthur, General Ballard and V. W. Germain there is but little.

Kitchener himself would have been unperturbed by this fact and would never have entered the lists of controversy to justify his actions, but there are many who deplore the unfairness of some of the contemporary estimates of a great man.

For Kitchener was not finished. When he left the War Office for the last time on the third of June, 1916, his control there was as absolute, his mind as clear and unwavering as when he first entered it as Secretary of State for War two years earlier.

It is idle to speculate on the future and the part he might have played in the last two years of the Great War and in the Peace Negotiations which followed,

but it is certain that he had the faith and admiration of the soldiers of all the nations engaged, even those of enemy countries, and an overwhelming public confidence at home ; forces which the strongest pressure of political opportunism would have found hard to overcome.

Although the memory of democracies is proverbially short, Kitchener is not forgotten. The great mass of the people remember his services, and when the old generals gather together, those still living who fought with him in Egypt and in South Africa, who served with him in India, who worked under him during the Great War, the talk sooner or later reverts, with words of affection and respect, to " K ".

ARTHUR HODGES.

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Finally I believe that my list of acknowledgements and of authorities includes every source from which I have drawn information and I offer my sincere apologies if inadvertently there have been any omissions.

FOREWORD

IN this year, which marks the twentieth anniversary of the tragedy of the *Hampshire*, Mr. Hodges has done well to trace anew the features of a life wholly spent and willingly laid down in the service of its country. The story of Lord Kitchener and the creation of the armies perpetually associated with his name, is the simple story of a faithful servant of the Crown who looked a little farther ahead than other men, chose what he believed to be the right path, and suffered no one to hinder him and nothing to daunt him from following it.

Reading between the lines of this story brings back very vividly to my mind, many episodes and traits of character, constantly displayed to me during the nine long years I had the great honour and privilege of being very closely associated with Lord Kitchener, when I served on his personal staff during the South African War and throughout the time of his command in India, years during which I was very seldom away from him.

Well do I remember how time and again he was faced with dangers, difficulties and obstructions which might have daunted any man who did not possess the unconquerable spirit of my great chief. He was impatient certainly at times, for he was by nature impetuous, but he was always possessed of the most astonishing spirit of perseverance and determination to allow no difficulties to defeat him, never failing to return to the attack until he had achieved the object on which his heart was set. It is this spirit which is, I feel, so well brought out by Mr. Hodges.

The story has been told more than once, both in

official history and biography and in unofficial narrative, but Mr. Hodges has succeeded in throwing fresh light on various stages of that steady upward climb, in which there was no looking back and very little going aside to rest. He has eschewed controversy, but in certain matters which have been the theme of warm discussion, he has given further proof of Kitchener's extraordinary prevision and provision.

In this volume one thing is again made abundantly evident. For more than a quarter of a century Kitchener was sure that a great trial of strength would in time, even if not in his time, be forced upon the country, and with this realization, one clear wish inspired him, one steady purpose drew him on, and in following it every faculty had to be made the instrument of a resolute will.

So in the hour when England accepted the tremendous challenge, Kitchener alone among soldiers and statesmen, stood forward to say that the war would last for three years and that seventy divisions must be our contribution to the Allied cause. Posterity will remember that in the great emergency he called his fellow countrymen to the colours and that three millions of them answered the call.

"Who can now doubt, that but for this man and his work, Germany would have been victorious." So wrote Douglas Haig, the soldier who led the Kitchener armies to final victory, and truly Mr. Hodges' book goes to show, in many ways, how entirely justified was this measured military statement. Great as the man was in life, he seems to grow and grow in stature as he recedes into History, and in History's final award of true fame, Lord Kitchener will surely have nothing to forfeit; he will have only, and richly, to enjoy.

Peterhouse, Cambridge.

W. R. BIRDWOOD.

April, 1936.

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LORD KITCHENER

I

PROLOGUE

IT was time to go.

As the Field-Marshal's car was heard turning in from the Canterbury road, the Field-Marshal and Col. FitzGerald, coming from the main house, descended the terrace steps and crossed to Weston's cottage. The Field-Marshal stopped with Weston, his steward, when he was at Broome. Although he had owned Broome for five years, he had never lived in the main house, and indeed had not expected to, his absence in Egypt, alterations to the house, and now his arduous labours as Secretary of State for War, making it impossible.

But he loved Broome. During his rare visits to England from Egypt he would, when circumstances permitted, drive straight there from Dover before going to London, and in the early days of the Great War he would motor there on Sunday mornings, returning to London the same afternoon. Later, when pressure of business began to lessen, he would leave London on Saturday afternoons, later still on Saturday mornings, always returning to London on Sunday afternoon in time for late tea, first to the house Lady Wantage had

lent him in Carlton Gardens, afterwards to York House, which it had been the King's good pleasure to offer him.

But now Broome was nearing completion and during this week-end, the last he was to spend there, he had finished arranging the furniture and his collection of porcelain in the great hall. This he had done the day before and that morning, before the arrival of Sir Humphrey Leggett. The Field-Marshal, Col. FitzGerald, his personal military secretary and friend of many years' standing, Sir Humphrey Leggett, and Capt. Arthur McMurdo, now dead, held adjoining grants of land in Kenya from the British East Africa Protectorate. They had built a house there and were developing their property together. The Field-Marshal liked to talk about it, and on Saturday Leggett had received a telephone message from FitzGerald asking him to come to Broome the next day. Leggett had taken a train to Folkestone that night, had slept there, and had motored to Broome Sunday morning. They had talked about the crops and herds in Kenya, lunching on sandwiches and coffee from thermos flasks whilst they stood by the long table in the great hall and when, early in the afternoon, Leggett went out to his waiting motor the Field-Marshal went with him. As they crossed to the car a drop of rain fell ; Lord Kitchener looked up ; " The weather is breaking ", he said ; " Fitz will be having a bad time tomorrow night ".

FitzGerald was a poor sailor and the Field-Marshal was referring to a rough crossing of Lake Victoria they had all made together in 1911 at the time the Kenya property had been granted them.

Leggett looked back before the curve of the drive hid Broome from view. The Field-Marshal was return-

ing slowly to the house, walking with an erect and soldierly gait except for a slight limp due to the breaking of his leg in India thirteen years before. He looked careworn but vigorous.

* * * * *

The whirring mechanism of the Field-Marshal's car being driven slowly in low gear ceased as it stopped before the steward's cottage, and silence fell on the demesne of Broome, on the ancient house, on the gardens, the terraces and the parklands. Often from the east, from the direction of the Channel, would come a faint continuous booming, a far away insistent series of concussions which tried the nerves and distressed the understanding, but today it was quiet and Broome lay drowsing in the mild June day undisturbed by the sounds of the guns in France, a hundred and fifty miles away, settling things in the only way the politicians ever know, finally, how to settle them. Intrigue, rapacity, ambition, stupidity, vacillation, stubbornness, on one side or the other, or on both, an impasse—and then, the bodies of men being blown to bits by cannon.

Warlike sounds, it seems, had been heard before at Broome. Legend had it that Cæsar had fought two battles within a mile. It was said that King John had camped close by with sixty thousand men when Philip of France had threatened invasion, and that Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, had marched here with an army raised to oppose the landing of Queen Eleanor. British troops had rested here on their way to Waterloo, and from the earliest times the country had been ravaged by Britons, Romans, Saxons and Danes. But in the

economy of nature war is a negligible thing and Broome drowsed amid a landscape which seemed to have only known peace.

The Field-Marshal got slowly into the car; Fitzgerald followed and it began its journey to London. He was not looking forward to the Russian expedition with any great pleasure, but he feared that Russia was in a bad way and he must do what he could. For forty years he had known little rest. Palestine and the desert, the Sudan and the desert, South Africa and the Veldt, the hot plains of India, continuous journeys, unceasing effort asked for by the Empire and given without a thought of not giving; the immense labours demanded of a man long past middle age after a life of toil by the outbreak of the Great War, and now this Russian enterprise with all the crowded and fatiguing ceremonial of a hurried official visit, dinners, receptions, reviews, presentations, journeys to the front, preceded by a voyage through arctic seas to Archangel, whose harbour even now was barely free from ice. The prospect was not an alluring one for a man who disliked ceremonial and who from long residence in hot countries had become exceptionally sensitive to cold; still, it must be done, and what must be done must be done well. That was his motto, "Thorough", carved with his coat of arms above the black marble columns of the two great fireplaces in the Great Hall at Broome.

* * * * *

The car, a Rolls, belonging to Sir Abe Bailey and driven by Smith, his chauffeur, who, with the car, had

been lent to FitzGerald for an indefinite period, rushed on toward London. Smith drove the Field-Marshal only occasionally, Collis, who, with another Rolls, had been placed at his disposal by the War Office, was his usual chauffeur, but to both it was a nerve-wracking business. Coming out of the War Office, FitzGerald would say to Smith or Collis, "To Woolwich, you must be there in half an hour", and they must be at their destination in Woolwich in half an hour, neither more nor less; or "To Broome", which meant that they must be there in two hours. The Field-Marshal, who could wait patiently for an indefinite time for the maturing of some far-reaching plan, could not brook small delays. His chauffeurs could feel those piercing eyes boring into them and it made them nervous, but Surguy, the Field-Marshal's valet, had told Collis that he had heard the Field-Marshal speak highly of them to his friends. This gave them confidence.

The car rushed on toward London at sixty miles an hour. Fast going in those days. The considerable towns of Canterbury and Maidstone had to be passed through and twenty miles of city suburbs and yet the distance, seventy-five miles, must always be made in two hours. This was good driving, for the car carried no distinguishing marks with which to clear the way.

As they came into London this Sunday afternoon, the rain, which had threatened the day before, began to fall in a fine drizzle. They crossed the river by Vauxhall Bridge and turning into Rochester Row the car skidded and swung completely around. Today, without a sign of impatience, the Field-Marshal said, "Going a bit

fast, Smith". Smith straightened the car, crossed to Buckingham Gate, passed in front of the palace, turned in at Clarence Gate and stopped at York House exactly at four. They had left Broome at two.

At York House his secretaries, Sir Herbert Creedy and Sir George Arthur, were waiting for him. After some pressing business had been attended to and papers signed, he and Arthur had tea in his own sitting-room (the room afterwards used by the Prince of Wales' equerries), Creedy and FitzGerald in another room. The Field-Marshal then changed into khaki and a start was made for King's Cross, he and Arthur in the Rolls, Creedy and FitzGerald following in another car. The special which was to take him to Thurso, that far northern port where he was to embark for Jellicoe's flag-ship, was to leave at a quarter to six.

On the station platform, roped off for his reception, the station officials were waiting to receive him and the party which was to accompany him to Russia. Sir Frederick Donaldson, General Ellershaw, O'Bierne of the Foreign Office, Robertson, Donaldson's secretary, and Second Lieutenant McPherson, who was accompanying the Field-Marshal as an interpreter. The rest of the party consisted of a clerk, Sergt. McLoughlin, a detective-inspector, Surguy, the Field-Marshal's valet, Shields, FitzGerald's valet, and another servant. Not one of this company survived the sinking of the *Hampshire*.

The hour for departure had almost arrived when it was discovered that O'Bierne's servant was not on board and he had with him O'Bierne's secret code. The Field-Marshal was consulted and, as a telegram in cypher had already been sent by the Admiralty to the

Commander-in-Chief at Scapa Flow informing him that Lord Kitchener was on his way, it was decided that O'Bierne should remain behind, find his servant, and follow in another special.

The Field-Marshal, always anxious to avoid publicity, had gone to his carriage immediately on arriving at the station; the others now followed and the platform became empty except for Creedy, Arthur, the station officials and, outside, the casual crowd which, having learned by that mysterious telepathy which runs through crowds, of Kitchener's presence, pressed close against the barriers, when, as the train was about to start, the Field-Marshal stepped on to the platform alone and, coming back to Arthur, said quietly, even gravely, "Look after things whilst I am away, will you", and returning, stepped again into his carriage. There was something so unusual, so unlike Kitchener, about the action itself, the supererogation of the words used, the tone in which they were spoken, that they seemed to Arthur at the moment to be weighted with a disturbing significance. Had he a premonition that he would not come back? The Queen Mother, the day before, hearing for the first time of his intended departure, had begged the King not to let him go. She had a presentiment that the journey would end in disaster; and from Doncaster the next day, posted *en route*, came to Legget a letter from FitzGerald, written for the Field-Marshal, suggesting that a certain individual might prove an acceptable associate in McMurdo's place in the development of the Kenya property. Why all this if he was to be gone only a month? Conclusions have been reached from these incidents that Kitchener

foresaw his end, but it seems unlikely that, with his strong, exact and practical mentality, he would have indulged in such apprehensions. Besides, he was looking forward to the future.

* * * * *

The train moved out of the station on its journey north. At Grantham, at a quarter to eight, a telephone message from King's Cross was handed to the Field-Marshal, informing him that O'Bierne's servant having turned up, O'Bierne had left on his special a little after seven. As the first special was running at normal speed and the second at sixty-five miles an hour, it was decided to wait for its arrival at York. The night was growing stormy with gusts of wind and rain. At eight the Field-Marshal and his staff dined together in the dining-saloon next to the drawing-room in which he was to spend the night. Liddell, the sleeping-car attendant, made up his bed whilst dinner was in progress. Liddell, a Scotchman, and an old employee of the Great Northern Railway, had travelled with the Field-Marshal before; once the previous year to Newcastle, where Kitchener had gone to review troops, and once many years earlier when he was on his way to Ballater to visit Queen Victoria. On that journey Balfour had joined the train at Hatfield. FitzGerald remembered the Newcastle visit and spoke to Liddell about it.

York was reached at nine-thirty. At quarter past ten O'Bierne's special came in. O'Bierne joined them, and the train went on. The party retired early, the staff in the sleeping compartments of the first-class

carriages, the Field-Marshal in the drawing-room. He left word that he was to be called at seven. The weather was growing steadily worse, with a strong wind and heavy gusts of rain. Early in the morning a stop was made at Bonars Bridge, whilst breakfast was taken on board, and, going on, the train began to ascend through a wild country with occasional glimpses of the sea until, nearing Thurso, it was struck by the full force of a north-east gale rushing across the barren moorlands of Caithness.

The Field-Marshal had wished to board the *Hampshire* or whatever ship had been selected for the voyage to Archangel at Thurso, probably to avoid the discomfort of crossing to Scapa Flow in a destroyer, but as the waters surrounding the Orkneys were infested with enemy submarines the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Jellicoe, decided otherwise and the destroyer *Oak* was sent to Thurso to meet him.

The train reached Thurso between ten and eleven. Captain Faviell, Commander of the *Oak*, and Captain Meredith, the transport officer at Thurso, were on the platform waiting to receive him. Kitchener and his soldier companions, in their heavy military great coats, got into the waiting cars which were to take them to the harbour. The servants, following with the luggage, were to cross to Scapa Flow in the fleet messenger, the *Alouette*.

The party boarded the destroyer and it put to sea. As it passed the shelter of Dunnet Head and began to plunge to the heavy surges of Pentland Firth, with the wind whistling past out of the dark void of the north, the sky overcast with sombre clouds and the air full

of a driving mist of rain, perhaps the Field-Marshal thought for a moment of Broome as he had left it the day before, of the old house drowsing in the still, mild air of the June afternoon amidst the trees and gardens of its ancient park.

II

EARLY DAYS—PALESTINE AND CYPRUS.

IN the year 1847, Kitchener's father, Lieut.-Col. Henry Horatio Kitchener, retired, crossed to Ireland on a visit to his brother, who was manager of the Dunraven estates in the county of Limerick. This was the year of the great Irish famine. Happening to be in Dublin when a large tract of land in Limerick and Kerry was being offered under the Incumbered Estates Act, he attended the sale as a spectator, but, scenting a bargain, the bidding being of a lethargic nature, he entered the lists and secured the property for three thousand pounds. Some years later he sold it at a very fine profit. If Lieut.-Col. Kitchener had not had a brother in Ireland, if he had not determined to visit him, if he had not happened to be in Dublin when the lands in Limerick and Kerry were offered for sale, Lord Kitchener's career might have been a different one, but his father, having bought property in Ireland, determined to settle there, and a year or so later moved into Gunsborough House near Listowel not many miles from the sea.

Chance, therefore, the God who holds our fortunes in his hands, decreed that Kitchener should be born on Irish soil, although his father's people had lived in Hampshire and East Anglia for generations, and his mother, a Chevallier, had come of a family who for many years had occupied Aspall Hall at Debenham, in

the county of Suffolk. His ancestors, though respectable, were undistinguished, and neither from inherited gifts nor from pre- or post-natal influences is anything discernible which would even partially explain the appearance in the world of this remarkable man. This phenomenon, however, has been observed in connection with other exceptional people.

The Kitcheners lived in Ireland until young Kitchener was thirteen, when owing to his mother's ill health, the entire family, Col. and Mrs. Kitchener, four sons and one daughter, moved to the ancient and picturesque town of Villeneuve near Montreux on the shores of Lake Geneva. There are lovely views from Villeneuve ; close by, the noble Rhone empties into the lake. Behind rise the peaks of the Dent du Midi and the ramparts of the Pennine Alps. Beyond Montreux one can see Clarens, where Oom Paul was to die forty years later, driven from Pretoria by Roberts and Kitchener. Before Clarens rises the little island of Salagnon, with its classic villa surrounded by cypresses, where Chartran, the painter, died in 1907. Chillon's grim reflection floats on the water less than a mile away and on clear days the pale silhouette of the Jura mountains stands against the sky across the lake in the direction of Lausanne. A pleasant place to spend one's early youth.

From 1863 to 1868, when Kitchener entered Woolwich, he was occupied in acquiring an education. At eighteen he spoke French and German and was reported to be brilliant at mechanics. He crammed in London with the Rev. George Frost of 28 Kensington Square, with whom he lived, for his Woolwich examina-



KITCHENER ON HIS MOTHER'S KNEE WITH HIS ELDER
BROTHER AND HIS SISTER

tions, and passed in twenty-eighth among the fifty-six successful competitors.

* * * * *

Kitchener entered Woolwich in 1868. In 1870, whilst visiting his father, who had settled at Dinan, France declared war on Germany. Kitchener offered his services to France, although he had no right to do so, and they were accepted. Whilst ballooning with a French officer, he caught a chill which developed into pleurisy and pneumonia. His father found him lying critically ill in a cabaret in a village not far from Laval.

This was the extent of his service with France.

He was brought to London as soon as he was able to stand the journey, and when well enough haled before the Duke of Cambridge at the Horse Guards. The old Commander-in-Chief gave him a good scolding and threatened him with the forfeiture of his seniority, but as he went on his severity ebbed away, and at last Kitchener heard him mutter apologetically under his breath, "And I believe that if I had been in your place I should have done the same thing."

Kitchener's punishment ended with the Duke's scolding. His seniority was not forfeited, and he was gazetted Lieutenant of Royal Engineers in 1871, but by 1874 he had become heartily tired of army routine at Aldershot and Chatham. He was known as a hard-working, rather uncommunicative young man, with a very fine head for figures, characteristics which he retained in later life.

At this time a survey of Western Palestine was being undertaken by the Palestine Exploration Fund. In 1872,

Captain Stewart, in command of the expedition, was compelled by sickness to return to England. A Mr. Tyrwhitt-Drake succeeded him in command until Captain Stewart's successor should arrive. This was a Lieutenant Conder, R.E., who had known Kitchener at Woolwich. Two years later Mr. Tyrwhitt-Drake succumbed to the rough life and hardships, members of the expedition had to undergo, and Conder recommended Kitchener to succeed him. Kitchener himself went to London, applied personally for the job and met various members of the Palestine Exploration Fund Committee, before returning to Chatham to await their decision, his mind wavering in the meantime between hopes that he would be the chosen one and fears that he would not.

When, therefore, on October 12th, 1874, he received a letter whose envelope was marked "The Palestine Exploration Fund", he must have opened it with some trepidation. Had he been successful? Yes—they had chosen him! The letter, from the Secretary of the Society, notified him that, having received the consent of the War Office, they had appointed him assistant to Lieutenant Conder. His pay was to be eighteen pounds six shillings and eight pence a month and he was to be allowed five pounds for excess luggage. Kitchener lost no time in getting his equipment together and taking his departure. At this time he was twenty-four.

* * * * *

The purpose for which the Palestine Exploration Fund had been founded in 1865 under the patronage of Queen Victoria, was the investigation of the archæ-

ology, geology, topography and physical geography of the Holy Land, but it was a scientific, not a religious, body. Walter Besant, the novelist, was its Secretary.

As Kitchener joined Conder in Jerusalem five weeks after receiving notice of his appointment, it is probable that he left England on the P. & O. liner *Malwa*, 2,933 tons, which sailed from Southampton on Thursday, October 29th. The *Malwa* would have reached Port Said on Wednesday or Thursday, November 11th or 12th, and one of the French or Russian steamers, the former fairly punctual and fairly clean, the latter neither the one nor the other, which left Port Said on alternate Saturdays, would have brought him before the rocky harbour of Jaffa on November 16th. Conder reported to the Palestine Exploration Fund that on November 16th he rode to Jerusalem from his camp somewhere near Hebron (a spot which, if the local inhabitants are to be believed, had witnessed the creation of Adam) to meet Kitchener, who was just arriving at Jaffa. There they joined company, proceeded to Conder's camp and set to work.

The party consisted of Conder, Kitchener, three non-commissioned officers, ten Syrian servants and an armed escort of one, supplied by the Government. Work finished in one sector, they would move to another camp, a train of men, horses and camels. In front the escort of one, then the Englishmen; behind them, if the district was a friendly one, perhaps a local sheikh riding on a dromedary, then a string of Arabs carrying long guns, and last of all the ten Syrian servants riding on mules. If camp was to be established near a village the head servant was sent on with the Imperial

firman, which explained the purpose of the expedition and demanded all necessary assistance. Sometimes the *firman* was treated with scant respect. At night their fox-terriers kept guard at the tents on the look-out for jackals, hyenas or thieving Arabs. Sometimes a sound of firing would wake them; robbers were attacking the village; shots, war cries and shouts would excite the camp animals; but the robbers, having stolen a cow or a horse, would retire.¹ Sometimes when not too tired, Kitchener and Conder would play a game of cribbage before going to bed.

In December the weather forced them to abandon work and in January, whilst on a visit to Jericho, Kitchener contracted fever in the unhealthy climate of the Jordan Valley, and as at this time no doctors were to be found anywhere in Palestine except at Jerusalem, Beirût, Aleppo and Damascus, they returned to Jerusalem, where they stayed until the end of February, when Conder again started out. Kitchener was still too weak to go but joined him three weeks later. In April they were at Ascalon on the coast, the birthplace of Herod, now a ruin, where Kitchener saved Conder from drowning whilst bathing in the sea, and soon after, working eastward toward the Dead Sea, they reached Gaza: "And Samson took the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts and went away with them and put them upon his shoulders and carried them up to the top of an hill".

From Gaza their work became more difficult, partly owing to the spring rains which in the absence of drainage turned the low-lying lands into almost impassable swamps, but principally because of increased

hostility and molestation on the part of the native population, which culminated finally in an incident which put an end to their work for a year.

On the tenth of July they arrived in the north in the vicinity of Safed, an ancient but unimportant town half Jewish and half Moslem, not far from the lake of Tiberius. The Jewish population lived by begging, and the manufacture of a peculiarly atrocious wine, which they sold for eightpence a bottle, and the Moslems, no doubt, by levying blackmail on the Jews. The expedition had pitched their tents in the neighbourhood of this uninteresting place, and Conder and Kitchener were resting after a hard day's work when Conder, hearing sounds of a disturbance, left his tent and found a local sheikh, Ali Agha Alan by name, engaged in throwing stones at one of the Syrian servants. Conder remonstrated and the sheikh tried to seize him by the throat. Conder knocked him down.* The sheikh sprang to his feet and drew his knife, but was disarmed by the camp servants, whereat he lifted up his voice and cried aloud, saying, "Where are my young men?" The young men came running. Soon a crowd of two hundred had collected, armed with scimitars, battle axes, clubs and guns. Shots were fired. A fight followed and the entire party would undoubtedly have been murdered had not one of their number, probably the government escort, knowing that he would be called to account if anything happened to his charges, hurried into the town at the first sign of trouble and returned in the nick of time with a guard of soldiers and the British Consular Agent. Ali Agha Alan and fifteen of his young men were placed under arrest.

Every member of the expedition was suffering from cuts or blows. Conder was badly injured about the head. Kitchener was struck on the head, wounded on the arm and badly bruised on the thigh. In addition he was suffering at the time from malarial fever. The party had been so knocked about that they broke camp and started for the monastery of Mount Carmel, forty miles away on the coast, where they would be able to receive some sort of attention. They reached it two days later. A letter was sent to the British Consul-General at Beirût giving an account of the attack and Kitchener, on behalf of Conder, wrote to the Palestine Exploration Fund that he and Conder did not consider that they could assume the responsibility of taking the field again until their assailants had been punished. As this would take some time, and as, in addition, cholera had made its appearance in the north, it might be as well for the party to return to England. Ali Agha Alan and his fellow prisoners had in the meantime been taken to Acre, where they were to be tried in September. The party waited until then, gave their testimony at the trial which lasted for a week, and sailed for England on October 1st, 1875. Ali Agha Alan, in spite of an admirable display of Oriental prevarication on his own part and that of his numerous witnesses, was sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment and his fifteen companions for periods varying from one month to a year. The town was directed to pay a fine (in instalments) of three hundred and forty pounds to the Palestine Exploration Fund.^a This was a sad blow for the poverty-stricken town of Safed, but not as bad as it might have been, for had Kitchener



KITCHIN'S BIRTHPLACE GUNSBOROUGH HOUSE, STAR LISTOWEL

and his party lost their lives, England undoubtedly would have insisted that Ali Agha Alan should pay the extreme penalty. This, not only Ali Agha Alan, but the entire Eastern world, with the simple logic of primitive minds would have considered unjust in the extreme, collective murder, as everybody knows, being a favourite pastime of even the most civilized peoples. However, Kitchener was not murdered and Ali Agha Alan was not executed. The Palestine Exploration Fund, at Kitchener's suggestion, remitted the fine after a small portion had been paid on account, and two of the protagonists of the dispute, Kitchener and Ali Agha, later became friends.

* * * * *

This first year had been a disappointing one for Kitchener. Half of the eleven months which had passed from the time he had left England to his return had been wasted by illness, wounds, and bad weather, but his love for the East and its native races, which grew so strong in him in later life, had already begun to develop, in spite of occasional acts of hostility, and he wanted to go back, and as what he wanted to do he usually did, he did go back, but not for another year.

The party reached London on October 21st, 1875. Kitchener, who was not yet free from fever, was granted leave until further notice with an allowance of eighteen shillings and seven pence a day, and crossed to France to stop with his father, who was still living at Dinan. He had taken a good many photographs in Palestine and while at Dinan, between attacks of fever, prepared

a book of views of the Holy Land, which he proposed to publish later. In March he had returned to London, where he and Conder worked on their map of Western Palestine in two rooms in the Albert Hall, and at Easter Kitchener's Guinea Book of Biblical Photographs was advertised for sale at Mr. Sandford's establishment at Charing Cross.

Conder had for some reason displeased some of the members of the governing committee and, when it was decided to resume the survey, Kitchener was chosen to head the expedition. Conder was to remain in London and continue work on the map. There were some vexatious delays before Kitchener got away. Public opinion was excited over the Bulgarian atrocities, relations between Russia and Turkey were strained, anti-Christian sentiment in the East was inflamed, and some of the committee thought it would be unwise to send the expedition out. Mr. Harper, one of them, had heard from Palestine that there was a good deal of ill-feeling there because it was thought that England was not backing Turkey, and that people were talking openly of murdering the Christian inhabitants. On December 20th, 1876, Kitchener wrote to Besant from Aspell Hall, Debenham, the place in Suffolk belonging to the Chevalliers, his mother's family.

"I hope you will impress on members" [of the committee] "the importance of my going to Constantinople and if so that I must start on the second, otherwise I shall not get round in time. I am quite ready to put anything in the agreement that will make their liability nil."⁴

The Fund had originally decided that Kitchener should first go to Constantinople and secure additional authorizations from the Sultan for the work of the surveying party, but, as the time seemed hardly propitious, this plan was abandoned. Kitchener, however, must have got away about the time he wished, for he reports his arrival at Beirût a little more than a month later.

The day he sailed from England must have been a proud one for Lieutenant Kitchener, aged twenty-seven. His pay had been raised to thirty-five pounds seven shillings and ten pence a month; he was to be sole commander of an expeditionary force (a small one, it is true, consisting of Sergeants Armstrong and Malling and Corporals Sutherland and Brophy); and he was bound for the East again, was to see again the wild life of the desert, mingle with the nomadic tribes, and take up once more the study of Turkish and Arabic. He wrote on March 6th that after seven days delay owing to the non-arrival of the Russian steamer at Port Said, he had reached Beirût on February 6th. About two weeks later the expeditionary force of four, which was coming by another boat, joined him, and on March 28th work was resumed. On that day too he received word that war had been declared between Turkey and Russia. This was a serious matter for Kitchener and the small party under his command. The East had been watching the growing friction between Turkey and Europe with increasing restlessness, indifferent to the woes of the subject peoples of Eastern Europe and the Christian populations groaning under Turkish misrule. Throughout Asia Minor, the Red

Sea littoral and Egypt, the Moslem world was watching, praying that the Turks might be successful in their struggle against the Gaiours. In Palestine, the tribes, although they hated the Turk, prayed for his success too, for it would mean that Allah had given them a free hand to put their Christian neighbours to the sword. If, on the other hand, the Turk was beaten, they feared that in revenge he would take it out on them. They had two reasons, therefore, for desiring a Turkish success. In the meantime, as a massacre of the Christian population might prove to be premature, the tribes, finding that Turkish preoccupation with the war was slackening authority, began to fight amongst themselves. In the Jebel Druse the Druses and the Arabs were already at war. The tribes were fighting in the south near Hebron. Throats were being cut on the road to Damascus. A young Englishman was murdered whilst walking from Nazareth to Haifa, and the Bedouins of the Beni Sahr were making raids quite unopposed by the authorities.

Kitchener was determined to finish the survey before he returned to England and he did not allow these disturbances to put a stop to his work. The party toiled early and late, whilst he sent his usual monthly reports to the Fund, confining himself principally to descriptions of the work in progress, except for occasional reassuring messages, such as, "Eight or nine days in Jerusalem and then for the desert. Don't get a panic. I shall take every precaution"; or, "Don't be nervous about me"; or, "The country is not in as bad a condition as you think". It would seem that he even inclined in them to an unnatural verbosity, for Sir Charles Wilson, one of the governing com-

mittee, wrote to Besant, who had sent a copy of Kitchener's reports to him in Ireland :

“ I like his reports so much, he evidently describes what he sees and does not go in for speculations. . . . There are symptoms, however, of the quotation mania. Could you not give him a hint that references to Vitruvius, Saladin, Quaresmius, etc., are out of place in the field. No one supposes he is carrying a library about with him and the quotations must be second-hand, but I am very agreeably surprised at his reports and am very glad he gets on so well with the people.”^s

Kitchener was making a point of getting on with the people, for one reason because it was the obvious thing to do, and for the other that he liked them. He would stand no nonsense from them, but on the other hand he worked to gain their confidence and friendship. He rewarded and he punished, beginning already to lay the foundation for a reputation which grew unceasingly until in later years his name carried extraordinary weight with all the Arab peoples throughout Africa and Asia. He was taking advantage of every opportunity to perfect himself in Arabic. Often in the evenings he would visit the sheikhs, sit with them and drink their coffee, in their tents of black goats' hair, or, if the weather was fine, in the open, when in the crystal air of the desert the moon and the stars seemed very close, he would listen to their story-telling, their songs and poetry. They had their faults ; the habit of truthfulness was not ingrained in them, but they had naturally

charming manners and, if at times they showed a deplorable lack of respect for the rights of other people to their own property, their laws of hospitality were never violated.

* * * * *

In the day-time work went on. Difficult and exhausting work. Every square mile had to be gone over, sometimes more than once. They dragged their surveying chains over stony plains, down ravines on rocky trails made slippery for their horses from the rubbing of camels' feet through countless generations, along roads worn so deep into the earth that they resembled the dry beds of streams or on others marked to this day with Roman mile-stones, through a country littered with the ruins of citadels, temples, palaces and tombs, strewn with fallen columns, broken reservoirs, shattered walls and towers of basalt and limestone, where armies had marched and fought from the earliest days of history. Mongols, Hittites, Jews, Egyptians, Persians, Saracens, Crusaders, Turks and French. Where all the conquerors of the Near East from Alexander to Bonaparte (spewed up by humanity like all their race to be at once its scourges and its heroes) had ravaged and destroyed. A land overrun century after century by invasions from the north seeking Egypt, or by attacks in return, and as they traversed this torn and tortured land, they read as in a book of the ceaseless turmoil which humanity begets, of its devastating restlessness, of the unchanging nature of man.

* * * * *



KITCHENER AS A BOY (WEARING SIDE-CURLS) WITH TWO
OF HIS BROTHERS

At last, from Dan to Beersheba, from Jerusalem to Jericho, the survey of Western Palestine was finished. Kitchener wrote to the Fund from Jerusalem on October 2nd :

“ I am sure you will be glad to know that the map is an accomplished fact and six years’ work has been finished. We wound up at Beersheba on September 28th, much quicker than I expected. The fact is we had to work hard, the water was bad, being salty and the colour of weak tea, and all our bread went mouldy. The country we have been in is only inhabited by Arabs who have been at war amongst themselves the last three years. They said that no Europeans had ever been in this part of the country before. I had some difficulty in getting rid of the expensive escort the Kaimacan of Gaza wanted to impose on me, but at last we started with only our own party. From Beersheba I had to take camels by force as the people who brought us deserted and left us there.”*

And later :

“ The country now in my opinion is in a more dangerous state than it has been at any time this year.”

In seven months he had surveyed and triangulated 1,340 square miles of country, revised 1,700 square miles and examined and described 816 ruins. Towns, roads, wells, water courses, cisterns and springs were set down, as well as hills, lakes, cultivated fields and trees, an achievement which any young man of twenty-seven might be justly proud of. The job had not been

an easy one. He had suffered from sun-stroke and repeated attacks of malarial fever. He had been stoned, bludgeoned and stabbed, but his was an indomitable nature and he was young.

Later the Fund Committee passed a resolution saying that they desired to "express their sense not only of the energy and ability but also of the tact shown by this officer in his conduct of his expedition, and of the careful economy with which he kept his expenses below the estimate". And Sir Charles Wilson stated, "that Lieut. Kitchener had omitted to mention through modesty the difficulties he had had to surmount owing to the country being at war. From private information he had received from the Consuls in Palestine, he could assure the meeting that the tact and energy displayed by Lieutenant Kitchener in protecting the Christian population had greatly tended to the preservation of peace in that country".

* * * * *

Kitchener set foot on English soil once more in January, 1878, and during the spring and summer worked with Lieutenant Conder at the South Kensington Museum developing the maps and writing a descriptive text to accompany them, wondering in the meantime what he was to do next. Little did he dream that during that summer his future was being determined for him by a number of old gentlemen who in June had gathered together at Berlin.

In January, the Russian army had been stopped before the walls of Constantinople by the British Fleet and, under pressure, Russia had reluctantly consented

to discuss peace with Turkey. In February, Turkish and Russian plenipotentiaries, with secretaries and servants, left Adrianople in thirty-six railway carriages for a conference at San Stefano, a seaside resort eight miles from Constantinople. The Turkish and Russian armies faced each other across the little river of Kara Su, fraternizing freely whilst their masters were attempting to arrive at decisions which would either allow them to return to their homes or set them again to the task of mutual extermination. In the streets of Stamboul crowds of Arab recruits in brand-new, ill-fitting Turkish uniforms waited to hear the verdict. Perhaps in deference to the demands of modern progress they had not come into the city chained neck to neck as the custom had been a few years earlier.

The verdict was peace, but the treaty which was signed proved to be unacceptable to the Powers. If the Sick Man of the East was to be operated on, all the surgeons of Europe must be in attendance, and Bismarck called for a consultation to be held in Berlin. The seven European Powers sent twenty specialists. The clinic was held in the classic interiors of the eighteenth-century Radziwill Palace on the Wilhelmstrasse. Here, in its chaste and lofty rooms, or in its lovely park, the plenipotentiaries wove their webs of international intrigue, or in the great circular salon discussed their momentous and secret matters, whilst de Blowitz, Paris correspondent of *The Times*, was listening to them, it was said, hidden in great discomfort, for he was very fat, under the immense horse-shoe table round which they were seated. At last decisions were arrived at and the Ottoman Empire

underwent a series of amputations. Servia, Roumania, Bulgaria and Montenegro were separated from it and an indemnity of three hundred million rubles and some Bessarabian and Caucasian provinces were given to Russia. Beaconsfield, as chief anæsthetist, administered a soporific to the patient in the shape of a defensive alliance and pocketed the Island of Cyprus as his fee.

It was this last incident which settled Kitchener's future.

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Cyprus was ceded to England in June. At the end of July Sir Garnet Wolseley was gazetted its first High Commissioner. Someone then suggested that a survey would be necessary for the proper administration of the Island. Did anyone know of an officer fitted to do this kind of work? Enquiries were set on foot and on September 2nd the Foreign Office wrote to the War Office that "Lieutenant Kitchener, who has been recently employed in carrying out the survey of Palestine, has been mentioned to Lord Salisbury as an officer possessing special qualifications for the work and his Lordship would be glad that he should be placed in command of the expedition".

This appears to be the first record that Lord Salisbury, who later was to exert so beneficent an influence on Kitchener's career, was aware of his existence, but before Kitchener finally left for Cyprus a difference of opinion arose between him and the High Commissioner. Wolseley wished a rough survey for revenue purposes only. Kitchener advised a scientific survey, such as



KITCHENER AS A CADET AT WOOLWICH ACADEMY
ABOUT THE AGE OF 17

had been made in Palestine and in which, in his share, he took a justifiable pride. Another opinion was taken which supported Kitchener. It was reported to Lord Salisbury that "No survey can be carried out without a triangulation, more especially if the survey is intended for Revenue purposes. A Revenue Survey may follow very closely on the heels of the triangulation but it must follow, not precede it. Lieutenant Kitchener and party already decided on should be sent out. . . . It is submitted that a letter be written to Sir Garnet Wolseley that Lord Salisbury has determined to have a triangulation first". The Foreign Office followed the suggestion made and Kitchener set sail for Cyprus, no doubt a happy man. He was leaving for the East again and was again to enjoy an increase of income, five hundred and fifty pounds a year in addition to his regimental pay.

This preliminary skirmish between the High Commissioner and the Lieutenant of Engineers had been won by Kitchener, but Wolseley had not accepted defeat. Kitchener found the triangulation of the island more difficult than he expected, owing to the steep mountain ranges and intricate valleys, and asked for two more non-commissioned officers. Wolseley saw his opportunity and objected. He wrote that Cyprus had no funds to pay for the survey as Lieutenant Kitchener proposed to carry it out and suggested that if the Imperial Government was not prepared to pay for it, the party be recalled. The Imperial Government was not prepared to pay and the party was recalled, but Kitchener was offered the direction of the Revenue Survey which Wolseley had advocated from the first.

Kitchener must have declined this offer because in May the Geological Survey Office wrote to the Foreign Office that a Mr. Russell "was willing to undertake the survey of Cyprus on terms proposed by Sir Garnet Wolseley". Wolseley had therefore won the second round.

Kitchener returned to England but he was not beaten.

A letter from the Foreign Office to the War Office, dated June 14th, 1879, says: "We are sending you an official letter of approval of the services of Lieutenants Kitchener and Hipposly [Kitchener's assistant] in Cyprus. Their work was brought to a sudden conclusion in consequence of objections raised by the Cyprus Government to the expense of carrying on the survey and it is feared that they may have been exposed to some hardship and inconvenience by the unexpected termination of their employment. Lord Salisbury proposes to provide for Lieutenant Kitchener by offering him an appointment under Major Wilson in Asia Minor and a letter asking for his services in that capacity has been sent to the War Office."

This was the Sir Charles Wilson who had objected to Kitchener's weakness for quotations in his reports to the Fund.

Wolseley had never liked his Cyprus post and in April returned to England to take up other duties. In June, General Robert Biddulph, an able administrator, was appointed High Commissioner in his place. Kitchener, still determined to survey Cyprus according to his original plan, wrote to Biddulph at once asking him not to forget him if the survey was reorganized. He had already gone to Asia Minor as vice-consul in

Anatolia, but his stay there was short. Biddulph, convinced of the necessity for a trigonometrical survey, asked for Kitchener's return, and in January, 1880, he was back again in Cyprus. This incident, a clash of wills between Wolseley, the most distinguished general in the British army, and Kitchener, a humble lieutenant of Engineers, prejudiced Wolseley against Kitchener, a prejudice which was not removed until some years later.

In March of that year, 1880, Kitchener wrote to Besant from Cyprus :

"Here I am back at my old work of surveying. I think I was wrong giving up the diplomatic line, but I could not let another pull my points about, so when the General [Biddulph] offered it to me I could not well refuse as he put in increased pay and better position. . . . I enjoyed Anatolia immensely, such lovely country. I met Wilson at Marsovan looking awfully well. He moves about in great state and is well received everywhere. He showed me some copies of the Memoir. How about the map [of Palestine]? I should much like to have a run up to Constantinople to present it to the old Sultan in my best Turkish (no small accomplishment now) to tell him what it is, why it was done, who did it, and how glad he ought to be to get it, with some hints of a *firman* for increased powers of excavation in Jerusalem or the survey of Haman. A flourish afterward by the *Times* correspondent whom I know and a letter from Lawrence Oliphant will start the whole thing again in grand style."

From 1880 until 1882 Kitchener was in Cyprus except for one visit to London in July, 1881, but, compared with the wide plains of Arabia, Cyprus was too circumscribed. His survey work was being carefully carried on but already he was fretting for a larger field, and once more the course of international events and the indirect consequences of Turkish misrule, this time in Egypt, gave him an opportunity of escape.

III

EGYPT—ISMAIL THE EXTRAVAGANT. ALEXANDRIA BOMBARDED—A DESERT JOURNEY

ISMAIL PASHA, second son of Ibrahim Pasha (former Viceroy of Egypt who died in 1848) had succeeded in 1863 in putting down a formidable insurrection in the Sudan. In recognition of his services he was appointed Viceroy by the Sultan and in 1867 raised to the rank of Khedive. He persuaded the Sublime Porte to sanction a new order of succession in Egypt based on the law of primogeniture, secured the right to coin money, to borrow money, and to increase his army. In fact, in return for an annual tribute to the Porte of seven hundred thousand pounds, he became virtually an independent ruler.

Ismail, a dramatic, energetic, ambitious and volatile character, who had been educated in France, where he had acquired a taste for various phases of European enterprise, then started on a career of extraordinary extravagance. He began to build canals, railways, bridges and telegraphs and administered them for his own profit. He appropriated a fifth of the cultivable land. He built theatres and palaces, attempted to do to Cairo what Baron Haussmann had done to Paris, and spent two million pounds in celebrating the opening of the Suez Canal. But if one is to spend money one must have it to spend or else be able to borrow it.

Ismail was obliged to borrow. He borrowed legitimately and illegitimately, sold concessions of all kinds, many with exemption from taxation and immunity from Turkish law. The pickings under Ismail's rule attracted all the shady crooks and concessionnaires in Europe. Many of the demands on Ismail for privileges were mere blackmail in which it must be confessed some of the European Governments played such an oppressive part that Ismail, at one of his receptions, was moved to exclaim, "Shut the window *tout de suite*. The French Minister has sneezed. If he catches cold the French Government will be claiming an indemnity!" In 1875 he was so hard up that he sold his shares in the Suez Canal to England for four million pounds, Beaconsfield borrowing the money from the Rothschilds in order to close the deal quickly. Loan after loan was negotiated, Ismail always paying through the nose, until in 1879 the public debt amounted to over a hundred million pounds and Egyptian administration had become so scandalous that the Powers intervened, Ismail was deposed in favour of his son Tewfik and a dual control by England and France was set up to institute plans for the liquidation of just debts and the general reform of the government, Monsieur de Blignieres representing France and Sir Evelyn Baring, England.

The advantage taken of Ismail's extravagance and his outrageous exploitation by unscrupulous concessionnaires and governments had aroused bitter animosity amongst many classes of Egyptians, and European intervention now created a Nationalist movement which, led by Arabi Pasha, Minister of War, culminated in an insurrection. The Khedive Tewfik



Ensign.

KITCHENER

A LIEUTENANT IN THE
ABOUT 1880

was besieged in his palace in Cairo, and riots took place in Alexandria with murderous attacks on Europeans. Thirty thousand foreigners left the city. The Powers sent warships ; in reply, Arabi Pasha concentrated troops there, began to strengthen the forts facing the sea and to mount guns.

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One evening, in June, 1882, whilst these events were in progress, Lieutenant Kenyon, later Major-General Kenyon, C.M.G., then attached to the Department of Public Works in Cyprus, dined with Kitchener and his assistant, Grant, who had succeeded Hipposly at Nicosia, the capital, which lies in the centre of the island. Two other men made up the party, Mr. Williamson, a well-known business man of Cyprus, and Mr. Rees, his partner. Williamson and Rees had obtained a contract to supply provisions to the British fleet and Rees was leaving for Alexandria on the mail boat that night. Kenyon, who had been at Lanarca on the coast that day, brought back startling news with him. He had heard that the British fleet was to bombard Alexandria. Kitchener, on hearing this, although he was recovering from an attack of fever, immediately said :

“ I’m going to Alexandria.”

Kenyon laughed. “ The only way you can get there is by going with Rees tonight. The mail boat sails from Limassol tomorrow morning and Biddulph has ordered that no one shall apply for leave by telegraph unless absolutely necessary, and that full particulars must be given. Of course if you say you want leave to go to Alexandria you won’t get it ! ”

Kitchener retreated into the isolation of a gloomy silence, finally saying again :

“ I’m going.”

He got up and sent off a telegram to the Chief Secretary at Troodos, asking for ten days’ leave without giving particulars and proceeded to pack his luggage in case his application should be granted, taking the precaution to prepare his paper of particulars to be sent in later. He sat about in suspense for the rest of the evening, hardly speaking, when at midnight, just as Rees could wait no longer, a reply was received granting his application but stating that he must send particulars in the usual way. The fact that he had been ill with fever may account for the fact that Biddulph’s instructions were waived in his particular case. He and Rees immediately started for Limassol and left for Alexandria the next morning.* Entering the harbour of Alexandria two days later they found the warships of six nations anchored there : vessels bound for Europe were crowded with refugees ; in the city smoke was still rising from the fires started during the riots which had taken place a few days earlier ; troops were being rushed from Malta to Cyprus to be at hand in case of need ; and Cairo was being evacuated of foreigners as rapidly as possible.

The following morning a tall, gaunt young officer with a pair of unforgettable blue eyes, one of which, slightly out of focus, added a disturbing quality to their piercing gaze, called on Colonel Tulloch on board H.M.S. *Invincible*, Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour’s flag-ship, and introduced himself as Lieutenant Kitchener, R.F., on leave from Cyprus. He explained

that he spoke Turkish and Arabic and he thought that perhaps these accomplishments might be of service to the Intelligence Department, of which Colonel Tulloch was the head. Officers who spoke Turkish and Arabic were not easy to find and Tulloch took him on at once.

* * * *

The Cabinet in London had decided that an army would be required in Egypt to restore order, and an expeditionary force was being sent out. Wolseley was to be in command. Tulloch had received a letter from Wolseley at the time of Kitchener's call, asking whether an advance by troops to Cairo from Alexandria by way of the Nile was feasible. Napoleon had taken this route a century before, but in the dry season. Tulloch thought it impracticable but determined to find out for himself and, although he had information that Arabi Pasha was on the look out for him or his spies, and knew that it would mean a speedy and beastly death if they were caught, he and Kitchener took the Suez train the next morning dressed as Levantine officials. Tulloch, having satisfied himself that the country was quite unfit for the route proposed, decided to return and, at Kafr ez Zaiyat, sixty-five miles from Alexandria, he pretended to be ill and he and Kitchener left the train. Tulloch was supposed to be too ill to talk and Kitchener made enquiries about return trains. The one they had expected to take was no longer running. They waited in suspense for hours until the last train run by the European administration, loaded with the remaining English inhabitants of Cairo on their way to Alexandria, stopped at the station. Arabi,

whose own intelligence department was efficient, heard of this exploit and a week later a Syrian with a fair complexion, suspected of being one of Tulloch's agents, had his throat cut on the platform of Kafr ez Zaiyat station.¹⁰

Arabi was warned to abandon work on the Alexandria forts but ignored the warning. England decided to take action, and, France declining to co-operate, was left to deal with the Egyptian problem alone. On June 10th, 1882, Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour sent Arabi an ultimatum to the effect that unless he abandoned armed resistance Alexandria would be bombarded. The warships of France, Austria, Italy, America and Russia, which had kept pilots constantly on board, steamed out to sea that day, accompanied by a fleet of steamships packed with refugees, anchoring two miles outside the breakwater, and at seven the next morning the bombardment began. Fire, chaos and massacre ensued, only stopped by the landing of bluejackets from the warships on June 14th. Kitchener was an inactive spectator of all this from the flag-ship. He had asked to be allowed to accompany one of the landing parties, but permission had been refused on the ground that he was not on active service. His leave was now at an end and regretfully he deposited his luggage in the Cyprus steamer. The hour for departure arrived and it was noticed he was not on board. The captain, to whom he was known, was waiting for his return when Dr. Heidenstam, the health officer at Limassol, who had been called to Alexandria and was returning to Cyprus, saw Kitchener putting off from the flag-ship in a small boat. He climbed aboard, seized his luggage

and got into his boat again, explaining that he had seen Admiral Seymour and had prevailed on him to telegraph General Biddulph asking that he be allowed to stay in Alexandria.

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The day this telegram was sent, Biddulph was dining with Williamson, the partner of Rees, with whom Kitchener had left for Alexandria. During dinner, Seymour's telegram was brought to Biddulph at Williamson's house. Biddulph opened it and, an expression of bewilderment crossing his face, he asked :

“ Did you know that Lieutenant Kitchener had gone to Alexandria ? ”

Williamson was obliged to admit that he did. Biddulph, who had heard nothing of it and who considered it an act of insubordination on Kitchener's part, replied to Seymour, refusing his request and ordering Kitchener to return at once.

It may be explained, in justice to Kitchener, that he always maintained that being in the service of the Foreign Office and free to go anywhere in Cyprus, an application for leave could only mean leaving the Island. Whether this contention was valid or not, as in sending his telegram he omitted to state that he wished to go to Alexandria, it is fair to assume that he was afraid, if he did, his request would be refused.

Kitchener returned to Cyprus by the next boat to receive the dressing-down he knew was awaiting him, and went back to his survey work, watching regretfully, meanwhile, the course of events in Egypt, and in his leisure moments assuaging his disappointment as best

he might by taking part in the steeplechases at the Nicosia race meetings, where he rode a winner, educating a tame bear he had brought with him from Anatolia, writing occasional letters to Besant and wondering what fortune had in store for him. Do men chosen to play great parts in the world ever know what their destiny is to be? Did the far sound of the bugles from the quarters of the troops stationed there ever wake in him true visions of his future?

In August news came of the murder by Arabs in Arabia of Professor Palmer, Captain Gill and Lieutenant Churchill, and the pursuit and capture of the murderers by Sir Charles Warren. Palmer had been engaged on the same work which Kitchener was to undertake later. He had gone beyond the Gulf of Suez with three thousand pounds with which to induce the Arabs to maintain neutrality in the war between Arabi Pasha and the British. Kitchener went later to prevent the tribes of the Korosko desert from throwing in their lot with the Mahdi.

In September, Arabi, who had been declared a rebel by the Egyptian Government, was defeated by Wolseley at the battle of Tel el Kebir, the authority of the Khedive was re-established and Arabi sentenced to transportation for life. England pardoned him later and he returned to Egypt, where he died in 1911.

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England, having undertaken the task of restoring order, found that she had assumed responsibilities which she could not altogether abandon. Egypt was prostrate, disorganized and defenceless, a prey to

internal disorder ; whilst to the south lay the desert and the terrible Sudan, peopled by predatory and warlike tribes stirring now with fanaticism and revolt, under the leadership of the Mahdi, against the greed and oppression of the Egyptian officials who ruled them. To preserve order and protect the country both from internal unrest and the menace from the south some kind of force must be left in control. England decided to withdraw her own troops and reorganize the Egyptian army, stiffening it with a backbone of British officers. She hoped in this way to limit her participation in Egyptian affairs to that of an adviser. This policy proved later to be impracticable, but in December, 1883, Sir Evelyn Wood left England with the appointment of Sirdar or Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army. On arriving in Egypt, Sir Evelyn happened to hear of Kitchener's exploit in leaving Cyprus for Alexandria and his journey with Tulloch. The story appealed to Wood's adventurous nature. He said, "I want that young officer", and telegraphed Biddulph asking him if Kitchener's civil duties were over as he required his services in Egypt. Biddulph could not well refuse, and on January 1st, 1884, Kitchener left Cyprus to join the Egyptian Army. Wood, perhaps because he had been in turn a sailor, a cavalryman and an infantryman, had peculiar ideas about making appointments in his new army. To Wingate he said, "You're a gunner, so I'll put you in the Intelligence", and to Kitchener, "You're an engineer, so I'll put you in the cavalry", but in these two cases at least this apparently erratic method was fully justified by the results obtained.

The creation of the new army out of the raw fellahin

proved to be a slow business. In the meantime the Egyptian Government had become terrified by the successes of the Mahdi in the Sudan and on its own responsibility had decided to send a force to subdue him. Hicks Pasha, a brave and capable English soldier, liked by everyone in the Egyptian service, was chosen for the job. Hicks left Cairo on February 7th, 1883, reached Khartum on March 4th, and on September 9th left Omdurman with a rabble of ten thousand men which he had collected, partly made up of Arabi Pasha's old troops, to meet the Mahdi.

* * * * *

Kitchener returned to Cyprus for a month to settle his affairs there and in February, whilst Hicks was marching to his death across the arid plains of Kordofan, returned to Egypt to take up his duties as second-in-command of the new cavalry regiment, with the rank of captain, at Cairo. During the summer, whilst engaged with Colonel Taylor, his commanding officer, in licking their recruits into shape, he received a letter from Besant. Considering that the suppression of Arabi Pasha's revolt had sufficiently restored order in Egypt and Arabia, the Palestine Exploration Fund had decided to send out an expedition to study the geology of the Jordan valley and the basin of the Dead Sea. Besant wrote asking if Kitchener could not go with it, continue his survey work and join it up with what he had already done. Kitchener had written to Besant about this trans-Jordan area whilst in Cyprus, saying that some day he hoped to do it. On October 7th, 1883, he replied to Besant :

"No doubt the trip will be delightful and I should like nothing better than to go on it, but not alone. Wilson asked me if I would go in charge of the survey with certainly one assistant, if not two. I said yes, but that is quite a different thing to sending me out alone to do the work and I don't think at present I would undertake it. I have not been home now for over five years and by taking my two months' leave for this trip I cut off all chances of getting home for some time to come. However, I did not consider that for a moment when I said yes to Wilson's proposal, but I don't feel I could do all the work myself in a satisfactory manner. Of course, I could run a reconnaissance of the road we travel but I should be rather ashamed of our work if with an assistant we could not do rather more than that. If I could have had Sergt. Armstrong [one of his old N.C.O.'s in Palestine], I should be satisfied, but no steps seem to have been taken, although he is quite willing to come and entitled to leave."¹¹

Sergeant Armstrong's leave was obtained and the party, consisting of Professor Hull, F.R.S., his son Dr. Hull, Mr. Hart, Mr. Lawrence, Kitchener and Sergeant Armstrong, met at Suez on November 8th. They reached Akaba on the other side of the Red Sea three weeks later and started north along the Wady (valley) Arabah toward the Dead Sea, a hundred and twenty-five miles away, passing close to the spot where Palmer and his party had been murdered the year before. Reaching the Dead Sea, they turned west toward Beersheba, which Kitchener knew well, but on

December 24th four Arabs riding on camels overtook them with a letter from Sir Evelyn Baring bringing news of the massacre of Hicks and his entire army by the forces of the Mahdi. A tale of worthless soldiery, treachery, thirst, dreadful privations and complete annihilation. This horror, which had occurred far down in the Sudan, more than a thousand miles away as the crow flies, was already known throughout Arabia, although Kitchener and his party had not heard of it. Fearing that the Arabs, excited by the news of the Mahdi's victory, might deal with them as they had dealt with Palmer, Gill and Churchill, Baring had sent his messengers to warn them. Kitchener saw that he must return and, accompanying the expedition for another week on the road to Gaza and safety, he left on January, 1884, with Baring's messengers for Ismalia, two hundred miles away straight across the desert. Describing this journey he wrote later to the Fund :

“I considered the road by Al Arish to Egypt was already well-known, so by myself with four camels and four Arabs, I made my way across to Ismalia, about two hundred miles. One of the Arabs had been part of the road fifteen years before, none of the others knew anything of it, but they were good men from the Egyptian Howeitats under a relation of the Sheikh Ibn Shedid. We passed a good many Arabs of the Tarabin and Ma'azi tribes and I was received amongst them as Abdullah Bey, an Egyptian official, thus reviving a name well known and much revered amongst them. . . . I was well received and heard many expressions of disgust the Arabs

have for Palmer's murderers. They were also full of accounts of Sir Charles Warren's pursuit of the murderers and the energetic steps he took to catch them. My route, for there was no path or road, was a good deal on rolling sand dunes with no water supply. At one time we held a council of war whether we should go back for water or push on to Ismalia, but as we had brought as much as we could carry from the last supply I insisted on pushing on, and we reached Ismalia without loss but at our last gasp for water. A trip I have no wish to make again."

Referring to the Palmer murders he wrote :

"I obtained from an Arab of the Howeitat tribe a story of the murder which I have never seen published in any account of it. I give it merely for what it is worth. Arabs, as everybody knows who has had to do with them, have a remarkable facility for making up a story to meet a supposed occasion. This is the story in his own words :

'Arabi Pasha, may he never rest in peace, sent to his lordship the Governor of NakhI to tell him he had utterly destroyed all the Christian ships of war at Alexandria and Suez, also that he had destroyed their houses in the same places and that the Governor of NakhI was to take care if he saw any Christians running about in his country like rats with no holes that the Arabs were to finish them at once. On hearing this a party of Arabs started to loot Ayun Musa and Suez. Coming down Wady Sudr they met the great Sheikh Abdullah [Palmer] and his party. They thought they were the Christians spoken of

by Arabi Pasha, running away, so they surrounded them in the wady [valley]. All night they stopped round them, but did not dare to take them until just at dawn, when they made a rush on them from every side and seized them all. The Arab sheikh who had come with the party ran away with the money [Palmer's fund of three thousand pounds]. The Arabs did not know Sheikh Abdullah and did not believe his statement and when he offered money his own sheikh would not give it, so they believed the party were running away from Suez and they finished them there. Afterwards the great Colonel [Sir Charles Warren] came and caught them and they were finished at Zag ez Zig. May their graves be defiled.' "

* * * * *

On January 6th, nearly five weeks after leaving the expedition, Kitchener reached Ismalia, returning to play his part in that tragic and bloody chapter of Egyptian history, lasting for fifteen years, which he himself was destined to bring to a close.

IV

EGYPT. GORDON. THE SPREAD OF MAHDISM.
KHARTUM. ZUBIR. LIFE IN THE DESERT. THE
FAILURE OF THE RELIEF EXPEDITION.

ABOUT the time that Kitchener, having finished his daring and dangerous journey across the Syrian desert, was rejoining his regiment of raw recruits at Cairo, a small slender man with graying hair, wrapped in a black great coat and wearing black kid gloves, arrived at Cairo in a special train from Alexandria.

This was Gordon on his way from London to Khartum.

After the massacre of Hicks and his army, England insisted on Egypt evacuating the Sudan. Gordon had previously been Governor-General of the southern Sudan from 1874 to 1879. In that year he had resigned, leaving Cairo after a stormy scene with the Egyptian officials when he had warned them that the corruption and cruelty of their agents in the Sudan would end in revolt. Now, when evacuation was decided on, Gordon, whose prestige amongst the tribes at the time was very great, was offered the post again with instructions that he was to relieve the various garrisons besieged by the Mahdi and clear Egypt out of the country altogether. He accepted the post, but it would seem in the light of later events that he accepted the instructions with reservations.

Gordon stopped in Cairo for two days before starting on his journey to Khartum. On his last evening in Cairo, he dined with Sir Evelyn Wood and a party of friends including Colonel James Stewart, who was going with him, Major-General Grenfell, General Sir Gerald Graham and Major Reginald Wingate, then attached to Sir Evelyn's staff. Gordon was to go from Sir Evelyn's directly to the railway station. When it was time to leave he went upstairs and kissed Sir Evelyn's children goodbye. Coming down he took off his evening coat and waistcoat, presented them to the butler with the remark that he would not need them where he was going, and put on others which he had brought with him in a bag.¹¹ The party then went with him to the Bulak railway station to see him and Stewart off. Graham was to accompany them as far as Korosko where they were to separate, Graham branching off to the left for the Red Sea, where he was to command British troops stationed at Suakin.

This was at ten o'clock on the night of January 26th, 1884. The party which was leaving consisted of Gordon, Graham, Stewart, Ibrahim Tanzi, Gordon's A.D.C., and old friend, and Graham's A.D.C. The special in which they were travelling reached Assiut the end of the line the next morning at eight. From here Gordon, who had forgotten his black kid gloves, telegraphed back for them. They were sent on but history fails to record whether they reached him or not. That morning they left Assiut by steamer arriving at Assuan, the first cataract, on Wednesday afternoon, January 30th. On Thursday morning, a little train took them to another steamer above the cataract and on the evening of Friday,



February 1st, they reached Korosko from which Gordon must begin his perilous five-day journey across the Nubian desert to Abu Hamed, where he would again meet the Nile, whose course between these two points had curved away a hundred miles to the west.

At Korosko, Gordon and Graham parted. Graham has described that pathetic scene in his "Last words with Gordon," published in the *Fortnightly Review*. At eight in the morning of February 2nd, 1884, Gordon mounted his camel. Ahmed, son of Huessin Pasha, sheikh of Berber and friendly to the English, rode beside him. At the head of the caravan of tribesmen and servants rode Saleh, his brother. Both were armed with great cross-hilted swords, double-barrelled flint lock pistols and carried shields of rhinoceros hide. The place was wild and desolate with volcanic hills and between the hills black ravines destitute of vegetation. Graham climbed the highest of the hills and watched the caravan threading its way along a barren valley until it was lost to view.

So Gordon, the mystic, the indomitable dreamer, the gallant but erratic knight without fear and without reproach, vanished from European eyes into the unknown.

Gordon crossed the desert safely and reached Berber on February 11th. At Berber, before continuing his journey to Khartum which he reached a week later, he committed a fatal error. He divulged to Huessin Pasha the Sheikh of Berber, father of the young chieftains who had escorted him from Korosko, the terms of the proclamation authorizing the evacuation of the Sudan. This was strange because to make it public

at this time was not only to endanger the life of every alien in the Sudan, but also because it was not at all certain that he intended to obey the instructions given him. In July he wrote to Baring from Khartum, "You say your policy is to abandon the Sudan. So be it". But if it was in his power he did not intend to abandon it, instructions or no instructions. However, making the purpose of the government known cost Gordon his life. At the news, which immediately spread throughout the Sudan, consternation followed amongst the friendly and neutral tribes. "If", they said, "Egypt and the English abandon us, who is to protect us from this false prophet, the Mahdi?"

But there was a reason for Gordon's action.

The Sudan, a vast territory, extended from Egypt on the north to Uganda on the south, and from the desert of Sahara on the west to Abyssinia and the Red Sea on the east. It contained a million square miles, an area greater than the combined areas of France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Austrian Empire before the Great War. It was peopled by Arabs of many tribes who were Mohammedans, given to outbursts of religious excitement, by the black Sudanese who were pagans, by Levantines, by Egyptians, by descendants of the Bashi-Bazuks, the Turkish soldiery who had settled there after its conquest by Mohammed Ali a hundred years before, and by a mixed population made up of an amalgamation of all these races. It was a country of rivers, mountains, deserts, swamps, and vast plains. The Bashi-Bazuks formed, with Sudanese recruits, the garrisons with which Egypt dotted the Sudan. The mixed populations, dwelling in the towns were idle

and dissolute, tilling just enough soil to keep body and soul together. The habits of the Arabs varied according to the characteristics of the country in which they lived. To the north, throughout the Nubian desert which stretched from the Sahara to the Red Sea and from the first cataract far below Khartum to the province of Kordofan, wandered the nomadic tribes with their herds of camels. South of them in a cultivable country which was not cultivated because it was unsafe to do so, dwelt the tribes and sub-tribes of the great Bagara family, predatory, warlike, cruel and rapacious. They were the slave traders of the Sudan, living between the great slave market of Khartum and the negro supply further south. Before Gordon went to the Sudan for the first time in 1874, it had for years been sunk in misery, a prey to the greed of the Egyptian authorities and to the slave traders. It had become a hell of iniquity, murder, and oppression. The Arabs preyed on the black population and on each other; and the provincial governors, Turks, Albanians, and Circassians, whose one thought was extortion, preyed on both. Throughout that vast country how many men, women and children died each year through massacre, war, torture, exposure, imprisonment, treachery and starvation, no man knew, no man cared. Gradually as conditions there became known, public opinion in Europe was aroused and it was in 1874 that Gordon, in response to an invitation of Ismail Pasha (Ismail the Extravagant) became Governor of the Equatorial regions and began to wage relentless warfare against the slave dealers.

At this time the greatest of these was one Zubir

Pasha, the strongest and ablest native character the Sudan ever produced. He possessed a private army recruited from the Sudanese negroes, always good fighters, from whom he also secured his supplies of slaves, travelled with chained lions in his escort and carried with him always a store of silver bullets with which to slay those of his enemies who by magic had made themselves proof against lead.¹³ He had conquered the great eastern province of Darfur and had become so powerful that he disdained to pay tribute to Egypt. Cairo feared him to such an extent that he was lured there and detained—a semi-prisoner—but in the south he had left his son Suliman, still with an army. Gordon ordered Suliman to disarm and disband it. Zubir from Cairo secretly ordered Suliman to resist. A bloody and difficult campaign followed. Suliman was captured, shot with eleven others and ten thousand captive slaves set free. Gordon saying, “So does God make gaps in the ranks of our enemies”.¹⁴

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And now Gordon was back again. The revolt he had predicted when he left Egypt in 1879 was taking place and he was to go to Khartum burdened with the task of clearing the Egyptian troops, the civil servants and their wives and children out of the Sudan. He alone was to do this without an army in the face of a formidable uprising. The undertaking was an impossible one. Why had he accepted it?

He hoped and believed that he would have Zubir's aid. Zubir's name throughout the Sudan, although he was still detained at Cairo, was more potent even than

that of the Mahdi. With Zubir's name to conjure with the wavering tribes would stand firm, the forces of the Mahdi would dwindle and he, Gordon, and Zubir would become masters of the Sudan. But he had caused the death of Suliman, Zubir's son, although he had not actually been present at the time of his capture and execution. Would Zubir forgive him? That he did not know but he must find out, and with his sanguine temperament he believed that all would be well.

Gordon had arrived at Cairo on January 24th. He had dined with Sir Evelyn Wood on the 26th and left that night as has already been recorded, but during the afternoon of his last day at Cairo he had met Zubir at the house of one of the Egyptian Ministers. The accounts of this meeting vary. Some say that Zubir displayed a bitter hatred of Gordon and that if they went south together it would mean death for one or the other. Gordon was of a different opinion and he left Cairo hoping and believing that Zubir would be sent to him. The proclamation he had made public at Berber meant, unless something were done, that authority would disappear once more, that slave trading would be resumed, that the Sudan would again sink into the morass in which he had found it in 1874, and that those five exhausting years from 1874 to 1879 would have been spent in vain, but with Zubir as ostensible Governor-General, and himself, and England, as the power behind Zubir, the Sudan would be his—and England's. Everything depended on his being given Zubir.

On his arrival at Khartum, before it was too late, he again asked for Zubir. Baring urged that his

request be granted, but the Cabinet in London, reluctant to countenance the appointment of so notorious a character, refused, and by its refusal left Gordon to his fate.

The defeat of Hicks Pasha and the publicity given by Gordon to the intentions of the government increased the impetus of the Dervish revolt which now began to spread north toward Egypt. Berber was invested in April and was captured in May with scenes of terrible slaughter. Huessin Pasha, father of the two young sheikhs who had escorted Gordon, was taken a prisoner to Omdurman, Gordon was cut off and the menace of a Dervish invasion of Egypt began to assume serious proportions. Graham, after parting from Gordon at Korosko had gone on to Suakim and had defeated the Mahdist forces on the shore of the Red Sea, but except for this they had suffered only one other reverse, which is now to be described.

Haddat, the Mahdi's Emir who had captured Berber, now advanced on Dongola, capital of the populous province of that name. Haddat had given out that he was proceeding to Dongola to hold a great durbar during which the Mahdi's *firman* as governor was to be handed to Mustapha Yawer, the present Mudir. At the announcement of these pacific intentions many Dongolawi left their villages to accompany Haddat and his soldiers to witness the ceremony. Amongst them was a holy man who doubted Haddat's sincerity. Listening one night outside Haddat's tent he learned that it was Haddat's intention to do away with Yawer and replace him with an Emir named Mahmud. This was according to the Mahdi's instructions. The Holy

man, who afterward became one of Wingate's spies and told him the story, leaving Haddat's camp with the excuse that he must attend the funeral of his father, lost no time in making his way to Yawer with news of Haddat's treachery. Yawer gathering together what forces he could command, immediately marched out of Dongola and advanced to Debbah ninety miles away, ostensibly to welcome Haddat, and took up his position in the fort there. Soon Haddat and his army appeared accompanied by a joyful crowd of Yawer's subjects, but when Haddat came within easy gun-shot he was met by a volley which killed many of his men, and incidentally, a good many of Yawer's own people. Haddat made a determined attack but was finally routed and Yawer notified Cairo of his victory.

The importance of Dongola, the last stronghold of the Egyptian Government, lying between Egypt and the Sudan, was so great, that the news was received with rejoicing and relief, tempered however, by doubts as to Yawer's reliability. Some even believed that the battle of Debbah and Yawer's victory was a pure invention manufactured by Yawer himself.

At this time Kitchener and Rundle (the late General Sir Leslie Rundle, K.C.B.) were stationed at Korosko, the point from which Gordon had started across the desert toward Khartum, where they had been since March. Their instructions were as follows :

1. Major Kitchener accompanied by Major Rundle will proceed as quickly as possible to Berber.
2. He will render all possible assistance to Huessin Pasha Khalifa. He will use every endeavour to

open the Berber Suakin road. He will if possible communicate with Gordon Pasha at Khartum or elsewhere. He will spare no expense to effect this object. On opening communications with Gordon Pasha he will carry out any instructions he will receive from him.

3. He will communicate with the Sirdar on all subjects of interest, when possible.
4. He will satisfy himself at Korosko and Abu Hamed if imminent danger will be incurred by his proceeding to Berber and will use his discretion as to stopping and awaiting orders from Cairo or returning.
5. He will obtain all possible information as regards the feelings of the Tribes both in the direction of Suakin, Dongola and Khartum.
6. He will act as far as possible in concert with Lt.-Colonel Chermiside, who is acting as Political Assistant to General Graham, and communicate with him on all occasions when necessary.

These instructions will be applicable to Major Rundle in event of his becoming detached from Major Kitchener. Major Kitchener and Major Rundle are authorized to draw on any public monies belonging to the Egyptian Government, in either Huessin Pasha Khalifa's hands, or in that of any Mudir. £10,000 for the present.

(Signed) EVELYN WOOD,
Sirdar.¹⁸

Finding conditions in the desert were too dangerous to attempt a crossing to Berber, they had made their headquarters at Korosko, living in a mud hut on the banks of the Nile and getting their supplies from natives or from the occasional Nile boats which stopped there, and began establishing posts across the desert from Korosko to the Red Sea (where Graham and Chermiside were stationed), garrisoned by neutral Bedouins whom they had subsidized, the intention being to turn back the agents of the Mahdi who were attempting to get through and incite the friendly tribes farther north, to revolt. The Sheikhs of the tribes who were helping them were Beshir Gibran and the two sons of Huessin Pasha who had accompanied Gordon to Berber earlier in the year.

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The desert is a terrible and hostile place. The nights are freezing cold, the days unbearably hot. Over its barren hills, rocky ravines and arid wastes of loose and shifting sand, cloud-bursts and blinding sandstorms sweep, travelling with terrific speed. By day it is barren and inhospitable, by night ominous and sinister in its loneliness. The desert is haunted by the ghosts of those who have perished there. Beyond Korosko, where Mohammed Ali lost an army from lack of water, one can hear at night cries of distress, faint trumpet calls, and the stir and tramp of a marching host. The desert is peopled with spirits and demons who conjure up visions of green and fertile places, waving palm trees, and pools of clear water to those dying of thirst. The djinns from the mountains of Kaf descend to the

desert on their evil missions. The Bedouins dare not go on their journeys without talismans to protect them, and as in its solitude, humans as well as spirits, work wickedness, and it is a place of treachery, surprise and sudden death, Kitchener and Rundle on their lonely expeditions took care never to pitch their camp for two nights in the same place.

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According to Yawer's message to Cairo, his victory over Haddat at Debbah took place on July 5th, 1884, and on August 2nd, a party of twenty camel riders, one of whom was the friendly sheikh, Beshir Gibran, arrived at Dongola after a six-day journey across the desert from Korosko. The riders were, with the exception of the leader, Bedouins. The leader, dressed as a Bedouin, was Kitchener, come to ascertain if possible Yawer's real intentions. Accompanied by Yawer he went to Debbah, a hundred miles beyond Dongola, and satisfied himself by ocular evidence that the battle reported by Yawer had actually taken place,¹⁴ but he did not trust Yawer. Yawer, a Circassian, small, old and wrinkled, had a manner too fawning to be sincere. Kitchener reported to the Sirdar that he had caught him in a number of lies and considered him a born intriguer. Kitchener thought he needed watching and asked permission to stay at Debbah. He was six days nearer Khartum and, through friendly natives, was getting in touch with Gordon.

Kitchener, through his daring and lonely exploits in the desert, which his knowledge of colloquial Arabic

made possible, was making a reputation for himself. Wood before this had written to Wolseley, then in England, asking for a brevet majority for him, but Wolseley, from prejudice, arising from the dispute over the Cyprus survey five years before, had refused. Baring, at Wood's instance, then wrote to the Foreign Office asking them to put pressure on the War Office, and Kitchener got his promotion. Wolseley's first words to Wood when he landed in Egypt to command the Khartoum relief expedition, were, "So you had your way about Kitchener after all". Kitchener, however, not having received the rank of Bimbashi, had assumed it, because an inferior one would not have carried sufficient prestige in the eyes of the natives.

Haddat had now received reinforcements from the Mahdi, and advanced again to attack Yawer. Yawer marched to meet him, and at Korti beyond Debbah, administered a crushing defeat. Haddat and Mahmud, who had been appointed by the Mahdi to supersede Yawer, were both killed and their heads were forwarded by Yawer to Wingate with the request that one be sent to the Khedive and one to Queen Victoria as tokens of his loyalty and esteem. Wingate had them buried.

Leaving Rundle disconsolate to keep an eye on the tribes in the vicinity of Korosko, Kitchener remained alone at Debbah and was there when the battle of Korti occurred. It was a filthy place, full of smallpox and garrisoned by jailbirds from Alexandria and the Levant, deported to the Sudan and pressed into service by Yawer.

The British Government had at last decided to send a relief expedition to the rescue of Gordon, and realizing the advantages of Debbah as a base, Kitchener did his

best with what native labour he could commandeer, to make it habitable and put it into defensible shape. The garrison made it difficult for him, committing various atrocities, robbing and maltreating the tribes in the vicinity, but, although alone and surrounded by outlaws and fanatics, he managed to maintain an authority over them. Besides, he was getting messengers through to Gordon, and with three friendly sheikhs had gone to within three days march of the beleaguered city.

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But what of Gordon since he had vanished within the gates of Khartum?

The Dervish forces had hesitated when it was rumoured that Zubir was to come to Gordon's assistance, but gained confidence again when it was seen that he did not appear. In reply to a summons to surrender, Gordon called a meeting of the leading people of the town. They voted unanimously to trust in him. On March 16th he made a sortie and attacked the Dervishes. Some of his troops deserted and he executed a number of their officers for treason; in May he inflicted a serious defeat on one of the Mahdi's generals whilst his forces were crossing the Nile. In August the loyal Mohammed Ali Pasha, known as Gordon's fighting pasha, defeated the Dervishes at Gereif, capturing sixteen hundred rifles and great numbers of swords and spears. At Halfiyeh he won another battle and cleared the river on both banks as far as Shendi, fifty miles to the north. On September 4th he won another battle twenty miles

to the south, the Mahdist forces retreating. Mohammed Ali pursued them. At night his tired army lost its way, was ambushed, and Mohammed Ali and half his men were cut down.¹⁷ This was a devastating blow. From that moment Gordon knew that he was lost unless help were received from the north. The river had now risen and he determined to send Stewart to Cairo if it was possible for him to get through, and endeavour to make the Government realize the true situation. Gladstone had said that he saw no reason for believing that Gordon was in any present danger. The pressure of civil and military opinion seemed to have no effect. Perhaps Stewart coming in person from that besieged and starving city might be able to accomplish something.

Kitchener, after Yawer's victory at Korti joined him there and accompanied him to Merawi another step along the Nile which he believed could be made use of by the relief expedition. At Merawi he heard that Stewart intended to make an attempt to get through to Korti by steamer. He did not know when the attempt was to be made but realizing that any messenger carrying details of the expedition would be sent to him at Debbah, he at once started back. Beyond Berber the river was dangerous and almost impassable for a steamer without an experienced pilot. Kitchener was not certain that such a one was available; besides, the reverain tribes were not to be trusted. He must get word to Stewart to leave the river at some point and cross the desert to Debbah. His realization of Stewart's danger was so vivid and his impatience so great that he left Yawer and hurried back to Debbah alone. At Debbah a

messenger was waiting for him. Stewart had left Khartum on the 10th. It was now the 23rd. Thirteen days. Was he too late? Perhaps Stewart's departure had been delayed. Perhaps there was still time. He sent a messenger at once to intercept Stewart and tell him to leave the steamer somewhere above Berber and take the desert route. He warned the Monsir and the Robatah, the river tribes, and the Hassaniyeh, the desert tribes at this point, that vengeance would overtake them if Stewart came to harm. The Monsir and the Robatah tribes were definitely hostile, the Hassaniyeh could perhaps be trusted.

A veil of silence then descended on the desert. Kitchener said afterward that he hardly slept during those days and nights of suspense. Where was Stewart? What had happened to him? Had he gone back? Was he a captive? Was he living?

At last, on October 2nd a runner came with the news that Stewart's steamer had been wrecked at Hebbah in the Monsir country. Kitchener sent him back immediately to Suleiman Wad Gamr, the sheikh of the Monsir, with this message :

“ If any harm befall Stewart, for every hair of his head I will have a life.”

But Suleiman Wad Gamr had murdered Stewart two weeks before.

Details of Stewart's death seemed to be unobtainable in London at that time and an old friend of his, the rich and hospitable bachelor Pandeli Ralli who lived in Belgrave Square, wrote to Kitchener asking if he could

give them to him. Kitchener's answer in part was as follows :

“ January 12th, 1885.

I am very glad to give you any information I can about poor Stewart, but I am obliged to ask you to consider it as private as I do not know what my seniors have, or wish to be, made known. I think it was on September 23rd that I first heard that Gordon was going to send Stewart down. [Kitchener must have meant by this that this was the date on which he first heard definitely when he was to start.] I immediately sent off a special messenger to catch him at Berber advising him to take the desert track from there, and warning him about the Robatah and Monsir tribes. I also sent a letter to Suleiman Wad Gamr to take every care of a steamer that was coming and help it in every way, and that if he did so he should be rewarded, but if not, for every hair of the heads of the occupants I would have a head from his family and tribe.

I cannot tell you all the telegrams I wrote on the subject, but Stewart was a dear friend of mine and I did all I could to help him. Gordon thought it his duty to save the few Europeans remaining in Khartum. Stewart was sent by him to save these and if possible bring back relief. There can be no doubt that Gordon had almost given up hope when the expedition started.

Stewart's steamer came safely to the beginning of the fourth cataract, about 70 miles above Merawi

and then ran on a rock. . . . The natives sent word to Suleiman Wad Gamr at Salamat, a village near. . . . Unfortunately, close to the spot where the steamer was wrecked, a blind man named Etman lived; this man is a fanatical follower of the Mahdi and a principal adviser of Suleiman Wad Gamr. Suleiman came to his house at once on hearing the news and also collected his men together. He got hold of the pilot of Stewart's steamer, a certain Mohammed (whom I know of and will catch), and found out that Stewart Pasha and the consuls were on board. Suleiman and Etman promised the pilot that if he would bring the white men unarmed to the house, his life would be spared. . . . Suleiman sent word . . . that he was the chief of the district and that if Stewart would come and take coffee with him he would be glad to receive him. . . . Stewart started with the consuls to go to the house, the pilot having recommended him to do so. As they were starting Suleiman sent word that his family were afraid if they came armed and with soldiers, the soldiers were sent back and Stewart was the only one who had a small pistol or revolver. The party consisted of four, Stewart, Power, the French consul and Hassan, the interpreter. They were well received by Suleiman and Etman and had coffee and dates served. Suleiman then went out and his men rushed in and filled the room shouting, 'Surrender'. Stewart said, 'What do you want? Is it my pistol? Take it, I surrender'. When they had the pistol they began to cut down one of the consuls. Stewart fought like a lion with his fists trying to protect the

consuls. Hassan, the interpreter, caught hold of the blind man and used him as a shield, though severely wounded he escaped. The three Europeans were killed with swords in the small room in Etman's house. . . . The party sallied outside and attacked the soldiers . . . they were killed. . . . The bodies, I believe, were thrown into the Nile. . . . I have heard a rumour yesterday that Suleiman Wad Gamr has been killed by his own people, but I do not believe this as it is probably spread about to avert the revenge of the English soldiers."¹⁸

This exchange of letters between Kitchener and Ralli led to a friendship between them which lasted until Kitchener's death. Kitchener was right in discrediting the rumour of the death of Suleiman. His property and that of Etman, the blind man, was destroyed by the relief expedition some months afterward, and Suleiman himself met his death five years later in a skirmish with Salah Bey and his friendly tribesmen near Korosko.

From Debbah, where Kitchener had lived alone for so many months, the Nile flows to the north for a hundred miles to Abu Hamed. At Abu Hamed it turns again toward the south and Khartoum. From Debbah straight across the desert to Metemmah, a town fifty miles from Khartum, is a hundred miles, by river two hundred. Troops were now being sent south and stores were being accumulated at Debbah. Wolseley established his headquarters at Korti on December 16th. The main body of the relief expedition was to go by

water but the situation in Khartum was plainly so desperate that a desert force was organized, under the command of Colonel Herbert Stewart to cross to Metemmeh and thence along the Nile to Khartum. Half way across the desert water was to be found at Gakdul.

The desert column, consisting of twelve hundred men of all ranks and two thousand camels with Kitchener and six Arab scouts riding in advance, left Korti on December 30th and reached the Gakdul wells, pools of water resting in a basin of black rocks, three days later. They marched at night and at the beginning of the new year the wild scouts of the Mahdi, hovering near, heard floating across the desert the notes of "Auld Lang Syne" sung by a thousand voices.

At Gakdul the stores were unloaded and Stewart returned to Korti with the camels to bring up more supplies and additional troops before going on to Metemmeh. He expected to return to the wells in ten days. Forts were built and roads made while he was away. On the 11th Colonel Stanley Clarke arrived with a convoy of stores and ammunition. Stewart came the next day and on Clarke's return Kitchener, much to his regret, was ordered to return with him. Stewart and his command, now fifteen hundred strong, left Gakdul on the 13th for the wells of Abu Klea. On the 17th a Mahdist army of ten thousand strong attacked him to prevent his reaching these wells, and the bloody battle of Abu Klea was fought in which Stewart was victorious. A square was formed and the night was spent near the wells disturbed by sniping, alarms, and the beating of the Arab drums. Before

daylight on the 18th, in the chill of the desert morning, they set off again in the direction of the Nile. They were sniped continually and at nine o'clock Stewart was mortally wounded, and Sir Charles Wilson, who was accompanying him to go at once to Khartum when the river was reached, took command. A temporary camp was established but a continuous rain of bullets made it untenable, and at half-past three, half of the force started for the Nile, the other half remaining to guard the stores, the wounded, and the camels. The advancing force was attacked again by the Dervishes at Abu Kru, who were again defeated. The troops went on and as darkness fell they saw the Nile gleaming before them. At el Gubat on the river they formed a camp. In the morning the wounded, troops and camels, which had remained at Abu Klea were brought in and the next day four small steamers which Gordon had sent to meet them tied up to the bank. Two hundred Sudanese soldiers on board joined the English who had lost almost half their number in killed and wounded. During the night one of the steamers patrolled the river but saw no signs of the enemy.

When news reached the Mahdi of the two bloody defeats inflicted on his people at Abu Klea and Abu Kru by the English and that they had reached the Nile, driving the Arabs before them, terror seized the Dervishes. The Mahdi, who, his followers believed, was often aided by supernatural occurrences, now had a vision in which the Prophet advised him to depart at once for el Obied far in the interior of Kordofan. All

of his emirs were of like opinion with the exception of one, Abd el Kerim. Abd el Kerim said, "Let us attack Khartum at once. If we capture it the English may go back whence they came. If they come on there will still be time for us to retreat". Several days passed in conferences and arguments, but when it appeared that the English were making no effort to advance, the Mahdi's courage returned.

On January 24th Wilson, with two steamers loaded with stores and ammunition, started for Khartum. They were small wooden affairs with antiquated machinery, protected from rifle fire by sheets of boiler plating. On the 25th one of the boats ran aground. It was unloaded, floated, reloaded and after going a short distance grounded again. It was again unloaded refloated and loaded. These operations consumed, twenty-four hours. On the 27th the Shabenka pass was reached, a rocky gorge where they expected to have a difficult time in running a gauntlet of rifle and gun fire, but the cliffs along the gorge were deserted. In the afternoon a native called from the bank that Khartum had been captured and Gordon killed, but he was not believed. On the 28th they came near enough to Khartum to see that the Government House, with other government buildings, was completely demolished. No Egyptian flags were flying anywhere in Khartum. Crowds of Dervish spearmen lined the shores of the Nile. A hail of bullets and shells assailed them. It was plain that Khartum had fallen.

Gordon's body, pierced through with spears, had been lying for two days in a well where it had been thrown, and his head, wedged between the branches of

a tree in Omdurman, was being used as a target for the stones of the Dervishes. Wilson put about and steamed away and after a succession of accidents and hair-breadth escapes, succeeded in reaching el Gubat on February 3rd.

So, with Gordon's death, ended another chapter in the history of the Sudan. Wolseley pleaded to be allowed to destroy the power of the Mahdi but the Government would not listen to him. The troops were withdrawn and the Sudan evacuated.

* * * *

In March of the previous year, before the Government had decided to attempt Gordon's rescue, Kitchener had written to Besant :

"I daresay I shall be home before very long as everything here is looking dark and gloomy for us in the Egyptian Army and I for one do not care to draw pay if I do not do the work."¹

The conditions which had given rise to this letter seemed to have returned. He resigned his commission in the Egyptian army and sailed for England on July 3rd, 1885.

V

MOMBASA. SUAKIN. DOUBTS AND DISCOURAGEMENTS.
THE SIRDARSHIP. IMPERIAL DREAMS. THE KHALIFA.
PREPARATIONS. THE ADVANCE ACROSS THE DESERT.
OMDURMAN

ON his arrival in England it is probable that he stopped for a time at least with Pandeli Ralli, Stewart's friend, and that he visited his father, now an old man of eighty, who had abandoned France and was living in Leicestershire. Kitchener, with officers of the Heavy Cavalry and Guards Regiments of the Camel Corps, went to Osborne to be presented to the Queen, and in London during the summer he took up the study of Ottoman law. He seemed to be rather at a loose end.

Colonel Kitchener, meanwhile, was watching his son's career with fatherly pride. In 1883 he had written to Besant :

“ The Manor House,
Cossington,
Leicestershire.

Dear Mr. Besant,

My eyes got so bad that London was unsafe and I am located as above and should you be anywhere near I should be glad to put you up. Not being able to see you I enclose Herbert's last letter. I see no reason why I should not. His commanding officer

in the Egyptian Cavalry was here last week and he gave a flourishing account of Herbert as a light cavalry officer. I should not think it unlikely that other Engineers might not object to cast a stone at him, you see he has gone right out of their groove. . . . I trust that you and Mrs. Besant are quite well. When are we to have another like, 'All Sorts and Conditions of Men.'

Yours very truly,

K. KITCHENER,

for H. H. Kitchener."²⁰

A little over a year before Kitchener's resignation from the Egyptian Army and his return to England his father had written, again to Besant :

"With my old military notions I have no inclination to rush into print, but Wolseley and Herbert having come to loggerheads as to how the Cyprus map should be brought out and as I know W. doesn't forgive or forget, he having refused Herbert the medal although he was under military command on board the Flagship at Alexandria, and since in two cases I have seen he has not forgotten their disagreement, I think it not unlikely when the time comes Herbert may not get all he deserves, and as Wolseley is fond of and fears the Press I cannot but think that if at the right time something suitable came out in the papers it might be of benefit to him. I wish you could give me a Sunday to talk this over, coming

on Saturday and stopping as long as you feel inclined.

Yours truly,

per C. Jones.

H. H. KITCHENER."²¹

The medal referred to was one refused to Kitchener on the military ruling that no decoration could be awarded an officer taking part in operations without orders. In the circumstances this ruling seems to have been a quite reasonable one.

It is possible that this disagreement between Wolseley and Kitchener, afterwards forgotten, may have accounted for Kitchener, in October, being ordered to Dublin to join the Royal Engineers there. Whatever the reason, the prospect of life in a climate which would surely be inimical to him could not have been a pleasant one. Opportunity for the moment seemed to have deserted him, but as he was about to leave for Ireland he received word that Lord Salisbury had borrowed him from the War Office to represent the British Government on a joint commission, English, French and German, which was to attempt the settlement of a dispute arising from German imperialistic ambitions which were conflicting with certain claims of the Sultan of Zanzibar. At this time Lord Salisbury and Kitchener had never met; in fact they did not do so until some years later, and though Salisbury had formed an opinion of Kitchener's capabilities which insured his not being forgotten where work requiring ability and tact was to be undertaken, yet when Kitchener went to the Foreign Office on November 5th to receive his instructions before leaving Charing Cross

that night to catch the Indian Mail, he must have interviewed someone other than the Foreign Secretary.

* * * * *

The Sultan of Zanzibar, Seyyid Barghash, claimed sovereignty over a strip of the mainland ten miles wide and extending several hundred miles along the coast of East Africa. The Germans disputed this claim. Friction had arisen between Seyyid Barghash and the German colonists in East Africa and the subversive activities of a subject of the Sultan's named Mbaruk had precipitated a crisis. After arriving at Zanzibar, Kitchener wrote to Lord Salisbury giving an account of the trouble :

“Mbaruk is an Arab of about fifty-five years of age, of good manners and address. He appears to have lived during the last five or six years in a state of almost constant outlawry. Before that period he lived with his relations at Takaungu as a peaceful subject of the Sultan. A dispute having occurred between Mbaruk and his relation, the Sultan of Takaungu, about the possession of a log of teak that had drifted into Kilifi Bay, Mbaruk left Takaungu and went to live at Gazi. He appears to have commenced a course of taking the law into his own hands and of highway robbery. He was on this account driven out of Gazi, but after submission and promises of good behaviour, he was allowed to return to Gazi, where he lived until about five years ago. He then, owing to a dispute about the marriage of some lady, killed the Sultan's Akida of Wanga and fled up country. After some time he wrote letters

of submission to the Sultan and was offered his choice of living at Takaungu, Zanzibar, Gazi or Pemba. He chose Gazi and returned there last November, to leave again as an outlaw in January after his attempted hoisting of the German flag."²²

This action of Mbaruk's, to which Kitchener refers, had brought matters to a head. When Seyyid Barghash heard that Mbaruk had raised the German flag in his territory, he sent troops, drove Mbaruk out of Gazi and tore down the offending emblem. German war-ships then appeared at Zanzibar. Mbaruk fled into the interior and resumed his old habits of pillage and outlawry. Sir John Kirk, British Consul at Zanzibar, urged Barghash to put an end to the activities of this firebrand, but the Sultan was afraid to act lest Germany should say, "Hands off, this man is a friend and ally of the Emperor". Representations were made to Berlin. It seems that Mbaruk had been induced to raise the German flag by a German Colonization Society and Berlin disavowed its action, but Sir John Kirk wrote to the Foreign Office that the German society was still encouraging Mbaruk in his course of disobedience and that a remittance of gold sent by them to Mbaruk had been intercepted.

It was to look into and adjust, if possible, the conflicting claims of Germany and the Sultan that the Commission had been appointed. The Commissioners met at Zanzibar and from there embarked to examine the coast from Somali Land to Cape Delgado. At almost every point they found representatives of the Sultan. The coast of the mainland seemed plainly to

be under Zanzibarian rule and to Kitchener and his French colleague Barghash's contention, that his sovereignty covered a strip ten miles in width, a reasonable one. Dr. Schmidt, the German delegate, insisted that it should be confined to three miles in width instead of ten. A deadlock followed, but in spite of the fact that Schmidt was in the minority he finally had his way. Kitchener wrote to Lord Salisbury :

"In my opinion the German Delegate's delimitation of the Sultan's territories would lead to the entire disintegration and annihilation of His Highness' dominions on the continent. The French and ourselves are in complete agreement. The German delegate has taken up a position which makes agreement impossible."¹

In England, however, friction at this time with Russia had made it desirable to avoid friction with Germany, with the result that Kitchener was told to give way. On June 7th, 1886, he wrote to Lord Salisbury a letter, in which his disappointment is plainly shown :

"It appears to be generally considered by my colleagues that the work of the Commission is now at an end. I can only say I deeply regret, if such be the case, that the last act of the Commission should have necessarily been the recording of one member's to my mind biassed opinion as the unanimous one of the Commission."²

But at the last moment he seems to have wrung some concessions from Dr. Schmidt, because two days later he wrote again :

"Dr. Schmidt proposed some alterations, the principal one being that he now allowed a continuous zone to the Sultan ten miles wide from Kiliva-Kilvinyi to the southern frontier, thus doing away with many absurdities of his previous delimitations."²⁵

Kitchener arrived at Zanzibar the end of November, 1885, and left about the middle of July, 1886. During these seven and a half months, he spent a good deal of time at Mombasa. Whenever the opportunity offered he used to explore the tortuous, narrow streets of the Arab quarter. All this native life fascinated him, as it had in Palestine and Egypt, and on many occasions he talked with the Arab head men, discussing domestic and political affairs with them. The friendships made in this way, and through his official position, were never forgotten, and when at Mombasa again twenty-five years later, he hunted out his old acquaintances there to talk with them again.

The part that Mombasa was bound to play in the future development of East Africa struck him so forcibly that in January, 1886, he wrote to Lord Salisbury strongly recommending its acquisition. Salisbury, impressed by his report, telegraphed Sir John Kirk, the British Consul at Zanzibar, asking his opinion on Kitchener's suggestion. Kirk answered :

"Kitchener showed me his report before sending it. I agree with his views. I regard Mombasa as the natural outlet of the most promising commercial field in East Africa and it is undoubtedly the best naval station on the coast. British interests there are already paramount."²⁶

In February, 1886, Kitchener again urged the acquisition of Mombasa. The Admiralty was consulted and replied that it could see no advantage from a purely naval point of view to be derived from the proposal to acquire Mombasa. Kitchener was persistent. The French owned the harbour of Diego Suarez in Madagascar, the Germans Dar-es-Salaam, fifty miles from Zanzibar, the English only a coaling station at Zanzibar, open to any attack. The Admiralty was again approached and answered that their Lordships had nothing to add to their former reply, but Lord Salisbury was not satisfied, and pressure was brought to bear on the Admiralty, with the result that a year later Mombasa passed to British control under a lease from the Sultan. For this England has to thank Kitchener.

Kitchener was on his way to England again when at Suez he received word of his appointment as Governor-General of the Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Littoral, but as the Eastern Sudan with the exception of Suakin, held by a small garrison, was in possession of the Dervishes, the post was one of no great distinction.

* * * * *

In the Sudan, the Mahdi, sunk in debauchery, had died the year before, poisoned by a woman whose family he had murdered and whose body he had constrained,¹⁷ and the leader of the Dervishes had fallen to the Khalifa Abdullah el Taaishi, a man stronger, more cruel and more pitiless than the Mahdi. The Mahdi had been a fanatic demoralized by success. The Khalifa was a bloody ruffian. Instead of fifty Egyptian garrisons throughout the Sudan, opposed to the Dervish

forces, there were now left, one on the Egyptian frontier at Wadi Halfa, one at Korosko, and one at Suakin, on the coast of the Red Sea, surrounded by territory in the Mahdists' hands. Two foreigners, Slatin, an Austrian who had been Governor-General of Darfur for the Egyptian Government, and Lupton, an Englishman who had held a similar post in Bhar el Ghazal far in the south, had disappeared in the tornado of revolt which had swept the Sudan and for a time no one knew their fate. Dongola, Debbah, Korti, Abu Hamed, Berber, had all been overwhelmed. The country now lying under the rule of the Khalifa extended from the Egyptian border to the fifth parallel, from the western limits of Darfur to the Red Sea, and the schemes of the intoxicated Dervishes included now not only the conquest of Egypt, but of the whole world. These grandiose plans, however, were for the future; at the time Egypt was menaced only by Osman Digna in the neighbourhood of Suakin and Wad el Nejumi, who was in command of a force somewhere south of Korosko. Osman Digna was disposed of first. General Graham, the same who had accompanied Gordon part of the way on his last journey to Khartum, had defeated him in a battle near Suakin a month later. After this defeat, Osman Digna had given little trouble until about the time when Kitchener received his Suakin appointment, when Suakin was again in a state of partial siege, the rebels firing on the town by day and night. Graham's forces had been withdrawn long before, and the town was garrisoned by a small body of Egyptian troops supported by marines from British men-of-war lying in the harbour. Kitchener attacked Osman, and in the

skirmish received a bullet which pierced his jaw and embedded itself in his neck. This was in January, 1888. He was sent to Cairo and returned to Suakin in March, but, his wound still troubling him, he left on leave for England in May, returning in September. In December, Osman Digna was decisively beaten at Gemaizeh and his activities put an end to for some time to come.

Wad el Nejumi had now to be disposed of and in the Battle of Toski in August, 1889, in which Kitchener commanded the cavalry, the Mahdist forces were badly beaten, Wad el Nejumi killed, and the danger of a Dervish invasion of Egypt for the moment dispelled.

* * * * *

In the spring of 1890, after careful consideration, Kitchener accepted the command of the Egyptian police and retired to Cairo. He had now been in the East for fifteen years, and during that time had made six short visits to England. Those had been years of danger and toil, his wound had for the moment pulled him down, he was tired, and the future looked none too bright. In spite of his record in Egypt, which had been a long and honourable one, his rewards had been the appointment on the Zanzibar Commission, where he had been compelled to acquiesce in what he considered an unfair verdict, and his appointment as Governor-General of the Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Littoral, which meant little more than the governorship of a squalid Arab town and the command of a handful of troops. True, on his return from England in September, 1888, he had been made Adjutant-General

under Grenfell, but a year later he was offered the command of the Egyptian Police. His hope was to succeed Grenfell as Sirdar on Grenfell's retirement and he feared that the new post had been offered him to frustrate this ambition. He was discouraged and mortified when the offer was made to him, but he had not seen his way to refuse it.

Sir Valentine Chirol, an old friend, happening to be in Cairo at this time, Kitchener asked him to dine. Chirol found Kitchener in one of his fits of depression, to which at this time he was often subject. He thought that his career in the army was at an end, and said that he would like some kind of civil appointment. Perhaps experience so gained, as a civil administrator, combined with his military experience, might better fit him to succeed in Egypt. It might even lead the way to his filling Cromer's place when the latter left, as he was bound to do either to enter the Cabinet or go to India as Viceroy.

Chirol urged him strongly to make no change, and, to encourage him, prophesied that if he remained in the army he would be Sirdar in two years' time; but Kitchener was in one of his stubborn moods and he left Chirol that night apparently unconvinced. By morning, however, he had changed his mind, and sent word to Chirol that he had decided to remain in the Army.¹⁰ In two years Chirol's prophecy was fulfilled. In April, 1892, Grenfell resigned and, following the strong recommendation of Cromer, Kitchener was appointed Sirdar in his place.

He felt now that he had at last been given a position commensurate with his powers. Far-seeing and ambitious, if ambition means the wish to solve problems and correct abuses which need solution and correction, he could see spread out before him a vista obstructed by many obstacles, but offering immense opportunities. The past of youthful endeavour, the thrill of personal risks and dangers was gone for ever now, and by patience, persistence, unwavering determination, he might be able to set in motion forces which would make possible the fulfilment of a dream he had long cherished in secret. From this moment he would lay his hand to the conquest of the Sudan, the destruction of Mahdism, and with the fulfilment of that ambition another would lie beyond, the gathering together of all the oppressed millions of Arabia, Egypt and North Africa, under one benign Government, administered by himself clothed with the authority of a new Viceroyalty, that of the Near East.

Vast dreams, destined never to be realized !

* * * * *

When Kitchener became Sirdar, the Khalifa Abdullah, who had succeeded the Mahdi at his death in 1885, had been in power for seven years. These had been years of unending nightmare in the Sudan. The Khalifa, with his powerful Bagara tribes, ruled with an iron hand. Rapine, bloodshed and horrors filled the land. Tribes who revolted were crushed. Those who had been lukewarm in the support of Mahdism were disarmed, their leaders executed, their camels taken from them, tribal systems were destroyed, families

broken up, wives taken from husbands to fill the Khalifa's harems, whole regions were depopulated, famine killed thousands, and it was estimated that the population of the Sudan from the beginning of the Mahdist revolt to the defeat of the Khalifa at Omdurman, had shrunk from eight millions to two.¹⁹ The corrupt, tyrannical and oppressive administration of Egypt before the revolt had been an era of gentle and beneficent rule compared with that of Abdullah. Once more the slave trade flourished and once more the long lines of Sudanese blacks, shuddering under the lash of the slave dealers, toiled across the steppes of Kordofan to Omdurman, Galabat, El Fasher, or Beni Shangul, to be sold in the slave markets, or, branded on the left hand with the name "Abdullah," impressed into the armies of the terrible Khalifa.

From the moment Kitchener became Sirdar he began to work with the ultimate intention of sweeping away this abomination, but the time was not yet ripe. Cromer was against it, and the Government at home was not in the mood to countenance further military enterprises. Kitchener kept his own council and, while waiting for the appointed time, worked incessantly at shaping his materials, the Egyptian troops under him, into a weapon of reliability and force. Sir Rennell Rodd, in his "Social and Diplomatic Memories," says of him at this time :

"His face, no less than his manner, suggested the contemplative spirit. Those curious blue eyes seemed to look beyond you to the desert horizons where so much of his life had been spent. His intuition,

rather than his reason, saw beyond the actual moment, and he elaborated far-reaching plans to be ready for execution when the time should be ripe. He was a very hard worker and he mercilessly exacted the maximum of effort from his subordinates. He seldom bestowed praise or even approval, and yet men worked for him as for no other. He appeared ill at ease in social life and rather shy in the society of women, though it was an error to suppose that he was never susceptible to their attractions. He had in those days no intimate friends. Many admired him. Very few really liked him. He walked by himself."

A letter written at this time to Sir Leslie Rundle, his Adjutant-General, explains his inflexibility of purpose and at the same time his realization that it sometimes resulted in injustice. There had been some difference between them, and Rundle had offered his resignation. Kitchener asked him to think it over. Rundle did so, and wrote to Kitchener that he had decided to withdraw his resignation. Kitchener wrote in reply :

" My dear Rundle,

" I am very glad to get your letter. No two people can look at things exactly alike. I always put what I think is for the good of the Army and its success so far above all other considerations, that I frequently trample on individual feelings without its ever occurring to me that I am doing so. All I can say in extenuation is that I do not do it for my own self assertion."⁹⁰

And later : " Though I often angered you, we have always remained firm friends."²¹

There is a modesty indicated in these quotations which shows a fine character. He had no vindictiveness in his nature. When the young Khedive Abbas, restive under British control, publicly insulted Kitchener at a review of troops at Wady Halfa, Kitchener only shook his head gravely, saying, " Naughty boy. Naughty boy ! " He forced a public apology from Abbas, not for himself but because the Army had been humiliated, but when Lord Edward Cecil, his A.D.C., expressed dislike of the Khedive for what he had done, Kitchener hardly understood.

Kitchener, with Rundle as his Adjutant-General, now began to weld the miniature Egyptian Army into a first-class fighting force. The Army budget was closely scrutinized by European Governments, England could or would not help, and Egypt was recovering slowly. Nothing could be earmarked for the future conquest of the Sudan, but he managed to emancipate the estimates of the Ministry of War from financial control and made the most of a permission by which sums credited under one head could be transferred to another.²² Month by month he accumulated material and husbanded his resources. He saved clothing and equipment, and piled them up in storehouses in the citadel. With money granted for clothing to be made of British material, he bought serviceable but cheaper material in other markets or set up looms for its manufacture. Every branch of Army administration was closely watched and by the most rigid economy he was able to fill a war chest against the time of need.

The human material he had to work with presented at first problems even more difficult. The bulk of his troops were of necessity fellahin, and the fellahin in the past had been found seriously lacking in the soldierly qualities which characterized the black Sudanese. When Baker's expedition, which ended so disastrously at the battle of El Teb, started in 1884, Kitchener had said, "I do not expect to see any of them return alive". But the fellahin could hardly be blamed for their conduct in the past. Under the old Egyptian regime they had been dragged from their villages, herded together under incompetent officers, half starved, packed into filthy and insanitary barracks, robbed even of their miserable pay and kicked and abused by their superiors.** No wonder they hated military service, and service in the Sudan in particular, from which none returned.

Under the new regime all this was changed. They were treated by their English officers with consideration, were looked after when they were ill, were paid regularly, and given leave at stated intervals to visit their families. When they appeared in their villages, well dressed, with money in their pockets, bearing themselves with military dignity, friends and relations stepped forward anxious to join the Army too. *Esprit de corps* and a regard for discipline developed quickly and they enjoyed drilling so much that, lacking officers to drill them, they drilled each other. These were the fellahin, sturdy and patient. The black troops, of which the army was partly composed, garrisoned the frontier, as they could not stand the climate of northern Egypt. Great care was taken in the selection of native officers and each year when Kitchener went to England on leave, he would personally

interview English candidates for service. Those who passed his searching examination were engaged for two years at excellent pay, but he would have no married men.³⁴

During this time Wingate was perfecting the Department of Intelligence which made him famous. One day in February, 1895, there appeared at Assuan, limping on bruised and bloody feet, a ragged and dirty figure dressed in native clothing with a shaggy and unkempt beard. It was Slatin Pasha the Austrian. Slatin had met Gordon when the latter was first acting as Governor-General of the Sudan. Gordon had liked Slatin and offered him service which Slatin had accepted. In 1879, Gordon had appointed him Inspector-General of the Eastern Sudan and later he was made Governor-General of the Province of Darfur. When the Mahdist insurrection began to spread throughout the Sudan, Slatin waged a gallant but unequal fight against the Dervishes until January, 1884, when he was forced to surrender. He wrote to Gordon of his surrender at the time, but the letter was not received until nine months later. Slatin was taken to Omdurman, where he was kept a prisoner for twelve years, but now Wingate at last had enabled him to escape—by what means has never been told—and Slatin had reached safety after a series of desperate adventures. The officers at Assuan gave him clothing, a razor, soap, and the necessary toilet materials. The dirty, fatigued and disreputable figure disappeared into a bathroom, to emerge once more a European. Sir Rennell Rodd, who happened to be at Assuan, spoke to him in German, but his own language had grown unfamiliar to him.

When he left that afternoon the band of the black regiment played the Austrian National Anthem, not well, but well enough to bring tears to Slatin's eyes as the steamer moved off carrying him on the first stage of his journey to Cairo.

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During this time the difficulties of Italy in attempting to retain a foothold on the Red Sea coast were attracting the attention of the Cabinet at home. The Italians had been having a bad time of it which had culminated in the disastrous defeat of General Baratieri at Adowa by the Abyssinians. This was a severe blow to European prestige. Beaten by the Abyssinians and threatened in the rear by the Dervishes, their position was precarious. Churchill says that England asked for something in return for helping them and received enough to make it worth while. Besides, French intrigues on the upper Nile were causing anxiety and suddenly the Cabinet decided on an advance to Dongola by way of a diversion. The telegram reached Kitchener at three in the morning of March 13th, 1896. At last the day had come, but too soon—he would have liked two years more in which to make ready, but on March 16th, three days later, a force left Wadi Halfa, the farthest frontier post of the Egyptian Government, and occupied Akasha, the main advance post of the Dervishes, seventy-five miles to the south. This was transformed into an entrenched camp. The problem was now one of transport. Beyond Wadi Halfa the only means of land transport besides the use of camels was provided by a stretch of thirty miles of railway,

built in 1833, which was antiquated and almost derelict. A scratch crowd of Sudanese, Dervish prisoners and Egyptians were got together and little by little the line was lengthened. Through April and May the work went on. The Dervishes were in force at Firket, fifteen miles from Akasha, and on June 6th, Kitchener surprised them and drove them out and the force moved thirty miles up stream to Suarda. A chapter of accidents then followed so trying that it seemed as if all the evil spirits of Arabian demonology had rushed to the assistance of the Dervishes. During June cholera broke out. For forty days the north winds on which the supply sailing boats depended to carry them south and which always blow at this season failed, and scorching sand-storms from the south took their place. In one brigade fourteen hundred men were prostrated by the heat at one time. Tempests of rain followed the sand-storms, producing floods. Thirty miles of railway track was washed away. If the line could not be repaired speedily the army, without supplies, would have to return. Kitchener, who was with the army at Kosheh, far up the Nile, rode through the night to the scene of the catastrophe. Thousands of men were put to work, the line was repaired within a week and the advance resumed. Many skirmishes took place with the Dervishes but they were driven steadily back and Dongola was occupied on September 23rd, 1896, six months after the Cabinet's telegram had been delivered at Cairo. Eleven years before Yawer, the Mudir, he who had sent the two heads to Wingate, had been deported to Cairo owing to suspicions of his loyalty and Dongola had been evacuated. The

Cabinet's instructions had now been carried out, but what was to be done next? The army could not be left there indefinitely in a hostile country seven hundred miles from Cairo, with inadequate lines of communication. Kitchener left for London in May, 1897, and, with Lord Salisbury's support, was able to return to Egypt with instructions to go ahead. The promise of certain British troops had also been given him. There was some question at the time whether Kitchener should command the campaign or not, but Salisbury made it known that if anyone else were chosen the country would have to find another Prime Minister. The Queen, with whom Kitchener dined, wrote in her journal at this time, "A striking, energetic-looking soldier . . . with a firm expression but very pleasing to talk to".

Returning to Egypt with the assurance of sole command and the promise of help, he was faced with the problem as to what plan of campaign would best cope with the difficult conditions he was bound to meet.

From Cairo to Khartum the distance is twelve hundred miles. To the west of the Nile for the whole distance lies the Lybian desert, to the east and the north the Arabian desert, with the Nubian or Korosko desert to the south. Beyond Assuan where the Cairo-Assuan railway terminated four hundred miles from Cairo, every ounce of supplies, food, equipment, munitions must be conveyed by camel or by the Nile, the course of the Nile, long and tortuous, being obstructed by six groups of cataracts, and innumerable rapids, navigable during the season of high water, but always difficult and dangerous. The water route alone,

therefore, was inadequate and the desert route impossible for large slow-moving bodies of men. The distance between Wadi Halfa and Abu Hamed by the Nile route which makes a vast detour to the west is four hundred miles, and in following it the second and third cataracts must be negotiated. Kitchener determined to build a railway from Wadi Halfa to Abu Hamed, a distance of two hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies, and use both the railway and the river. This plan of building a railway across the waterless Korosko desert was opposed as impracticable, but Kitchener was not to be argued out of it, and in May, 1898, work was started. The task would be immensely simplified, of course, if water could be found. Kitchener ordered wells to be sunk at two points; water was found at each. It was looked for later at other points, but never discovered. As no one would wish to attribute superhuman powers to Kitchener, this must be regarded as a piece of extraordinary luck, unless we assume that he had noticed conditions and weighed probabilities which had escaped others and made correct deductions from them. But there is another explanation: in Cyprus it is said he had a reputation as a water diviner.⁵⁵

Water tanks were now distributed along the line of progress and in spite of many engineering difficulties and the intense heat an average of a mile and a half a day was laid, and by July 20th, 1898, the line stretched south from Wady Halfa for a hundred and twenty miles. It was now necessary to take Abu Hamed and a force under Hunter moved up stream from Dongola, captured it on August 7th and on the last day of the month

occupied Berber which had been evacuated by the Dervishes without an effort at defence. As the Dervishes usually never hesitated to attack, it is probable that they greatly overestimated the strength of Hunter's force.

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And now, with the occupation of Berber, all that country which Kitchener had known so well thirteen years before—Dongola, where he had first met Yawer after a week's ride across the desert from Korosko; Debbah, where he had lived for months alone with Yawer's jailbird garrison whilst he sent his spies across the desert into Khartum with messages to Gordon; Korti, where he had gone to verify Yawer's account of his victory over Haddat; Merawi, where he had first heard that Stewart was about to leave Khartum and had hurried back to Debbah to warn him and wait in anguished suspense for news of him; the fourth cataract, near which Stewart had met his death, and Berber, where Gordon on his way to Khartum had read the proclamation which was to undo him—all these were in his hands and with the completion of the desert railway to Berber the last stage of his momentous enterprise would be begun.

At this time Kitchener was a difficult companion. The privations of the desert life which he had led for so many years had taxed even his strength, and made more acute the headaches from which he had always suffered. This and the burden of responsibility he was carrying displayed itself in a determined and disconcerting reserve. He was moody and silent. For he was

carrying a heavy burden indeed. The War Office, who thought that the whole campaign should have been turned over to them, were against him and would not have been broken-hearted at his failure. Cromer, although he supported him loyally, disliked the campaign and took a pessimistic view of the situation, and Cromer meant the Egyptian Government. Gorst, its financial adviser, was bitterly opposed to Kitchener. He had, too, his detractors in London ; a large part of Foreign Office opinion was against him.²² If he failed, not even Lord Salisbury could save him : it would mean a ruined reputation and a definite end to his career. Besides the opposition in high quarters and the almost insuperable physical and geographical difficulties he had to overcome, his iron severity did not increase his popularity amongst his officers, but, like Kitchener, the task he had set himself to do must be done. Nothing else mattered. Considerations of health, comfort, affection, the claims of personal ties, must for the moment be brushed aside. Nothing must be considered except the successful accomplishment of the task before him. The indomitable will which controlled a highly organized nervous system concealed from his associates the discouragement which sometimes weighed him down, but in October, 1897, he wrote to Sir Clinton Dawkins, Under-Secretary of State for Finance in Egypt, from Abu Hamed ;

“ I hope there will be no question of finishing off the whole thing at Omdurman next year. . . . You have no idea what continual anxiety, worry and strain I have through it all. I do not think I

can stand much more and feel sometimes so completely done up that I can hardly go on, and wish that I were dead. Before next year's work in the field begins I must get some leave or I shall break down. I have had none for three years";⁸⁷

and on one occasion even his iron determination failed him, for on the eve of the battle of the Atbara, Rawlinson states that whilst he was alone with him, Kitchener burst into a sudden momentary fit of uncontrollable sobbing.

This battle, the last before the final test, was fought in April, 1898. Mahmoud, one of the Khalifa's generals, with Osman Digna, who for the moment had abandoned the neighbourhood of Suakin, and a force of fifteen thousand Dervishes, were defeated at the junction of the Atbara and the Nile, fifteen miles below Berber. The troops then went into summer quarters between Berber and the Atbara until August 20th, the date Kitchener had decided on for his final advance.

Charges have been made that Kitchener neglected to make proper provision for the care of the wounded, but Rawlinson says that after the battle of the Atbara he was seriously disturbed about the "treatment of the British wounded, who, from lack of proper arrangements, suffered unnecessarily from heat and thirst. The medical arrangements in the British brigade were not nearly so good as those of the Egyptian Army and Kitchener was furious".

On August 20th the advance began toward Omdurman, one hundred and twenty miles away. Supplies for three months had been accumulated at the Atbara

encampment in case of a reverse and the army moved to a new camp at Wad Hamed, sixty miles from Khartum. On the 27th the army concentrated at the sixth cataract and cutting loose from the last base began its final march by land and river, eight thousand British and seventeen thousand native troops, nine thousand horses, camels and mules, ten gun-boats and five steamers towing long lines of barges and sailing boats loaded with supplies.

Two days later Kitchener sent a letter to the Khalifa :

“ To Abdullah, son of Mohamed El Taaishi, Head of the Sudan.

Bear in mind that your evil deeds throughout the Sudan, particularly your murdering of a great number of Mohammedans without cause or excuse, besides your oppression and tyranny, has necessitated the advance of my troops for the destruction of your throne in order to save the country from your devilish doings and iniquity. Inasmuch as there are many in your keeping for whose blood you are held responsible, innocent, old, infirm, women, children and others, abhorring you and your government, who are guilty of nothing, and because we have no desire that they should suffer the least harm, we ask you to have them removed from the Dem to a place where the shells of guns and bullets of rifles shall not reach them. If you do not do so the shells and bullets cannot recognize them and will consequently kill them and afterwards you will be responsible before God for their blood. Stand firm, you and your helpers, on the field of battle to meet the punishment

prepared for you by the praised God, but if you and your Emirs incline to surrender to prevent bloodshed, we shall receive your envoy with due welcome and be sure that we shall treat you with justice and peace.

KITCHENER,

Sirdar of the Troops in the Sudan.”¹⁶

On the morning of September 1st the cavalry, with Kitchener and his escort of Lancers, came to the top of the Kerreri hills. Four miles to the south they saw the houses and mosques of Omdurman, beyond these and the river, the tomb of the Mahdi rising above the ruins of Khartum, and on a plain to the west the Dervish host, an immense mass of men and horses with, rising above it, forests of spears and innumerable bright banners. The main body of Kitchener's troops reached the village of Egeiga on the Nile in the afternoon and stood to arms. The Dervish host had advanced until it was three miles distant and then halted. Would they attack during the night? A rush of fifty thousand men, when accurate artillery and long-distance rifle fire would be difficult might result in a disastrous defeat. Kitchener, who left nothing to chance, had timed his advance so as to reach the end of his march under a full moon, but in addition to this precaution, to prevent a night attack, natives were sent out to reconnoitre the position of the Dervishes with instructions which would indicate that the Sirdar himself, intended to attack that night. These instructions were passed on to the enemy by natives friendly to them with the result that after the tropical darkness, had

descended swiftly, both armies lay quiescent waiting for the day.

It is probable that Kitchener slept little during that night. Of his army of twenty-five thousand men, seventeen thousand were native troops "all not equally reliable," as he himself had said. He was at the end of a slender line of communication twelve hundred miles from his base of supplies, opposed by an army of fifty thousand fanatics, eager for death. Europe, Asia, Africa, the whole world, were looking toward him and that untried army lost in the distant desert.

Throughout the night the troops lay under a full moon and the distant gleam of the Southern Cross far down on the horizon, whilst the Arab war drums beat unceasingly and the searchlights of the steamers thrusting through the darkness played on the Dervish camp, until with the break of dawn the bugles roused them to action.

VI

RETURN TO ENGLAND. DEATH OF THE KHALIFA.
DEPARTURE FOR SOUTH AFRICA. CONCLUSION
OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN
WAR.

ON Wednesday, October 26th, 1898, the Mayor of Dover, Sir William Crundall, received a telegram from the Sirdar at Marseilles. The Massageries steamer Senegal had reached there in time for the Sirdar to take the *rapide* for Paris, leaving at nine in the morning. This would enable him to catch the train leaving Paris for Calais at nine the following morning and to cross by the Calais boat arriving at Dover at half-past two. A telegram was sent to the Sirdar offering him a special boat for the channel crossing but this was declined.

Eight weeks had passed since the night when, under a full moon and the distant gleam of the Southern Cross the opposing hosts had waited for dawn on the plain before Omdurman, when the bugles had sounded ushering in the fateful day.

Every detail of the Battle of Omdurman, the wild rush of the Dervish hosts, the charge of the 21st Lancers, the thrilling moment when Macdonald was in peril from the Khalifa's reserves, has been described many times and need not be told again. Victory had followed and Kitchener had stepped into a position of public

regard (unrealized by himself) never, since Wellington, equalled by any Englishman.

At this time the Spanish-American peace commission was sitting in Paris, where another Ministry had lately fallen, overthrown by the Dreyfus scandal: the visit of the Kaiser to Palestine and the Near East was causing some uneasiness; the Czar, two months earlier, had invited the Powers to take part in a conference looking toward the reduction of armaments and the establishment of the principles of universal peace; a fortnight before, the Empress of Austria had been assassinated at Geneva and the Dowager Empress of China had by a *coup d'état* deposed the Emperor Kwang-Hsu. Monsieur and Madame Curie had discovered two radioactive substances in pitchblende; on Tuesday the Cambridgeshire had been run at Newmarket and had been won by an outsider, and on that very day a Mr. Henry Hopkins had been remanded at Bow Street charged with attempting (unsuccessfully) to obtain charitable contributions by fraud from Mr. Arthur Balfour. From these incidents it will be seen that the tragi-comedy of human existence was carrying on then as now, with the same eternal ingredients—but a new hero was about to appear upon the stage.

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At two-thirty the Calais boat became visible against the turgid waters of the channel and was seen approaching the landing stage of the pier used by the Ostend boats. The sky was overcast but the day clear. Kitchener, standing on the forward deck, which had been reserved

for him, dressed in a grey travelling suit, was surprised at the crowds waiting to receive him. Every available point was occupied by human figures ; the Admiralty Pier, two thousand feet long, was crowded for its entire length on both the upper and the lower promenades. The harbour was decorated with a deep, fluttering and unbroken fringe of humanity. Accompanied by Rawlinson and Watson, his A.D.C's., Kitchener stepped on to the landing stage to greet the waiting officials. For a moment there was silence, the crowds expecting to see a figure in uniform, and then as he was recognized, cheer after cheer arose to welcome him, rolling out against the cliffs under the chilly sky. The usual formalities followed : an inspection of the guard of honour of Seaforth Highlanders and a company of Royal Engineers from Shorncliffe, a luncheon at the Lord Warden Hotel, and speeches, which had to be cut short as at five-fifteen his special train was to leave for London.

In London vast crowds were waiting. Even the Newmarket race meeting was affected, there being a decided falling off in the attendance on that day. The Press had printed the hour at which his train was due but had cautioned the public that they would not be admitted to the arrival platform which would be reserved for friends and officials bearing special passes. Barriers were erected at the platform entrance, and, before the Royal waiting-room, opposite to which Kitchener's carriage was to stop, a space was marked off by rows of crimson benches. Two hours before the appointed time crowds began to assemble. The space before the station, Victoria Street, Wilton Road and Buckingham

Palace Road became packed with people standing in the gloom of the autumn afternoon, the patient good-natured British public which knows its rights and means to have them.

As the hour of arrival drew near all eyes within the station were strained through the murk for the moving lights of Kitchener's train. At last it was seen and as it came to a stop the crowd surged forward, the wooden barriers at the entrance to the platform were overthrown and smashed, the crimson benches were swept away and with them the waiting ladies, the waiting friends and officials; people swarmed over the roofs of trains about to leave, blocked the tracks, clung to window sills and trucks; nothing like it had been seen in London before." The police were powerless and Kitchener had to fight his way through a mixed but idolatrous mass of human beings made up of every class of London society.

No man for many generations had so caught the goodwill and admiration of the British public. Aided by no advantages of position, fortune or education, he had by the force of genius and a personality of extraordinary power achieved unparalleled distinction, and, almost a stranger in his own country, untested as compared with the nation's leaders at home, he immediately took his place amongst them, accepted without question as a commanding and impressive figure.

Two days later he went north to visit the Queen. Balfour went with him to take up his duties as Minister in Attendance. At Aberdeen vast crowds were assembled. At Ballater the Queen's carriage was waiting to take them on the two hours' drive to Balmoral.

On that day Her Majesty directed that letters patent be passed under the great seal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, granting the dignity of baron of the said United Kingdom unto Sir Herbert Horatio Kitchener, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., R.E., Sirdar of the Egyptian Army by the name, style and title of Baron Kitchener of Khartoum and of Aspall in the County of Suffolk. Parliament voted a grant of thirty thousand pounds.

In London crowded hours were forced upon him. Private and public dinners, luncheons and receptions which he hated and to which he submitted only of necessity. He hated, if he were the object of it, all the majestic pomp and rich pageantry with which England knows so well how to honour her favourites. The State robes, the uniforms, the regalia, the plumes, the orders, the rumble of Royal carriages, the salutes, the sounds of military bands and the dense crowds frantically cheering that striking figure which, stern and unbending, paid not the slightest attention to them for which they liked him all the more. He hated all this, but from Pandeli Ralli's house in Belgrave Square, where he was stopping, in the morning when it was quiet, he could hear the bugles sounding at the barracks in Birdcage Walk or in Chelsea. This he must have liked, recalling as they did the life he was used to, recalling the far sound of bugles across the spaces of the desert.

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Angeli, the Austrian portrait painter, for whom the Queen had a great liking, happened to be in London



LORD KITCHENER AGED 49

A hitherto unpublished photograph taken at Buckingham Palace on his return from Egypt, 20th July, 1899

and was commissioned by her to paint Kitchener's portrait. Angeli went to Charles Horsfall, also a portrait painter, an old friend who had studied in Angeli's studio in Vienna, and said to him, "The Queen has commissioned me to paint Lord Kitchener's portrait. I speak no English and I am sure that Lord Kitchener speaks no German. Do come and act as interpreter during the sittings". Horsfall agreed, on condition that he be allowed to make some studies of Kitchener at the same time. A room on the first floor at Buckingham Palace, looking out over Green Park, was placed at their disposal, and Kitchener gave them three sittings. Fuchs, the sculptor, a protégé of the Prince of Wales, photographed him at the same time. He posed admirably, sitting like a rock, a thing most men find very difficult, and surprised them by speaking excellent German.

Angeli's portrait was not a success but that painted by Horsfall and now in the National Portrait Gallery, is the only one in existence which conveys in a measure the force of Kitchener's personality.

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During the six weeks Kitchener remained in England he made his headquarters at the house of Pandeli Ralli, Stewart's friend and now his. Pandeli Ralli's father, one of the founders of the Greek firm of Ralli Brothers, merchant bankers, had moved to Belgrave Square in 1818. Pandeli Ralli had preferred a career of elegant dilettantism to business, and at his town house and at Alderbrook, his country place, delighted in offering his

friends a lavish hospitality. Small and dapper, he was an amusing and delightful host with a fondness for quoting from Greek, Roman, French and English classics.⁴⁰ Poor Ralli's life ended in darkness. He became blind some years before his death.

Lord Edward Cecil says of Kitchener at this time, "He was a dangerous man to go and see in London as, quite regardless of the fact that you had other things to do, he seized you and set you to work on whatever you could do efficiently. Few—I was going to say no one, and I am not sure it is not nearer the truth—dared refuse, and the result was the house was always full of the most heterogeneous elements, grumbling over their servitude, but often, if they had any sense of humour, amused at the situation. A very proper friend of mine spent his time in burning, after seeing that there was nothing important in them, the mass of love letters which descended on Kitchener, and which would have offended him. He placed women on a far higher level than is usual in these days and it really hurt him to see or hear anything which touched his ideal. Another very sensitive man of great natural politeness spent his time in interviewing the most intimidating people such as multi-millionaires, corporations, big banks, and firms to obtain from them contributions to the Gordon College. He would come back in the evening looking as if he had been at a disturbed mass meeting, gloomily wondering what Kitchener would say to the result."⁴¹

Gordon College was the project, part of Kitchener's far-reaching plan, which for the moment occupied his mind, and a week before his departure for Egypt he

made his public appeal for funds. He told Ian Hamilton that he intended to turn his triumph into cash to get the wherewithal to build and endow the College. Writing to *The Times* he said :

“ That region (the Sudan) now lies in the pathway of our Empire and a numerous population has become practically dependent upon men of our race. A responsible task is henceforth laid upon us and those who have conquered are called upon to civilize. In fact, the work interrupted since the death of Gordon must now be resumed. It is with this conviction that I venture to lay before you a proposal which, if met with the approval and support of the British public and of the English speaking race, would prove of inestimable benefit to the Sudan and Africa.”

A week later when sailing to take up his duties as Governor-General of the Sudan, eighty thousand pounds had already been subscribed and the establishment of the College assured.

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For thirteen years, from 1885, when Gordon was murdered and thirty thousand of its inhabitants put to the sword, to the victory of Omdurman in 1898, Khartum had lain a complete ruin, uninhabited by a single person with the exception of Gordon's ancient native gardener, who lived there growing dates for the table of the Khalifa from a few very fine date trees, which still stood in the devastated palace garden.

On the day after Omdurman whilst Wingate stood

on the bank of the Nile at Khartum, he saw three Nile steamers, flying the Dervish flag, coming from the south. He signalled them to stop and sent one of his native officers to tell them that the Khalifa had been defeated and that their commanders had better come ashore. They did so and Wingate questioned them. They said that from far down the river they had received word that some foreign officers with black troops had appeared at Fashoda from the interior. They had gone to Fashoda to investigate, had been fired on from the bank, losing a number of men, and had decided to come to Khartum and report to the Khalifa. Wingate asked them if they had seen the flag carried by this expedition. They answered that they had. They were standing on a sandy beach at the time and Wingate, handing one of them a small stick he happened to be carrying, asked him if he could draw the flag on the sand. The dervish drew a rough representation of the French tricolour. It was plain from this that Marchand, whose progress had been rather anxiously watched in London, had reached Fashoda and Kitchener immediately started south. Wingate was left in command at Khartum. Like the battle of Omdurman this exploit, Kitchener's expedition to Fashoda five hundred miles to the south, and his firm and tactful handling of a critical situation, has been told many times. The tension between England and France was relieved and Kitchener and Marchand remained friends and correspondents until Kitchener's death.

During Kitchener's absence on his expedition to meet Marchand, and immediately afterwards, during his visit to England, already recorded, Wingate reconstructed

two rooms in the ruined palace of Khartum and it was in these that Kitchener lived when he returned from England to take up his duties as Governor-General of the Sudan.

In 1888 when Kitchener was stationed at Suakin and about to go on leave, Rundle had been sent there to act for him during his absence. On the day of Rundle's arrival Kitchener took him out in his boat, manned by native oarsmen, to show him his dominion. As they rowed around the harbour looking at the squalid town surrounded by the desert waste, Kitchener said, half mournfully, as if to derive some little comfort at least from his surroundings, "The best of this place is that you are monarch of all you survey".

What a change in his fortune since that day twelve years before. He was monarch now of that vast territory which from the beginning he had determined to wrest from the grip of the barbarian and place under British rule, and the first step toward the establishment of that Near Eastern Empire of which he dreamed had been successfully taken.

* * * * *

At this time amid a flood of flattery and praise which might well have turned a head less hard than Kitchener's he received a shrewd and kindly letter from Cromer, a man ten years his senior, of great ability and of immense experience as a civil administrator. Cromer wrote after Kitchener's return to Khartum :

"I want to add something privately to the official and semi-official instructions which I am sending

you. I am, as I feel sure you are aware, anxious that your civil should be as successful as your military administration. I have been at this sort of work for some forty years, and know something about it. I think, therefore, you will not mind my speaking frankly to you.

In the first place, pray encourage your subordinates to speak up and to tell you when they do not agree with you. They are far too much inclined to be frightened of you. In the second place, the main thing in civil and political life is to get a sense of *proportion* in one's mind, and not to bother too much on every particular view as regards non-essentials.

I commend these principles to you. Whatever success I have attained in life is largely due to strict adherence to them. I learnt them from my two old chiefs, Sir Henry Storks and Lord Northbrook, who taught me most of all I know.

In the third place, pray keep me informed and consult me fully. A secretive system will not work in civil as in military matters. The latter are far less complex and in some respect less difficult than the former. Remember that previous consultation and full information do not necessarily involve centralization, indeed the very reverse is the case. Excuse me for writing my views so frankly."⁴¹

But the path of Kitchener the conqueror was not to be one of unbroken smoothness. An expedition he sent in pursuit of the Khalifa who had escaped after Omdurman was unsuccessful. Kitchener had placed his brother in command over the heads of officers of

greater ability. Why he should have done this it is difficult to understand. Morley who had, apparently from misinformation, unfairly criticised his administration at Suakin many years before, now attacked him in Parliament for the destruction of the Mahdi's tomb, which had been blown to pieces, the Mahdi's remains scattered and his skull buried in a secret place.

Kitchener assumed entire responsibility for this action, explaining that it was necessary to impress on the native mind, which he no doubt understood better than Morley, that Mahdism was dead for ever, but the incident caused a reaction against him at home. There was some discontent among the Egyptian troops, fomented by the Khedive who hated Kitchener and had never forgiven him for forcing him to apologize to the army for his affront to it in 1893. Kitchener, Gorst, Under-Secretary for Finance, and Cromer did not always see eye to eye, and indeed Kitchener and Gorst were definitely antipathetic.

But what were obstacles to Kitchener? It sometimes seemed to his subordinates as if he deliberately chose the more difficult way in order to have the better opportunity to exercise his immense energies.

On November 24th, 1899, a year after his return from England, Wingate finally extinguished the last spark of rebellion in the Sudan at the battle of Um Debreikat. The Khalifa and all his Emirs were killed. Wingate sent Rodd a photograph of them lying in a group, the sun beating down on their dark bearded faces.

At this time the war in South Africa was already under way, the reverses to the British Arms had begun, ending with Colenso, and on the morning of December 16th, the Queen at Windsor, hearing the disastrous news from her daughter, who was breakfasting with her, said, "Perhaps now they will take my advice and send out Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener, as I urged them to do at first".⁴³

The Cabinet had already decided on this step, Lord Salisbury insisting that Kitchener should go as Chief of Staff, and on that very day the appointments were made public, Kitchener receiving his orders two days later at Khartum.

Kitchener must have read them with mixed feelings. Hardly a year had passed since the conclusion of a protracted campaign which had taxed even his strength to the utmost, followed by the hurried and fatiguing journey to England, and now, after less than nine months had passed in the position he had so long sought, duty called him to play another part, perhaps even more arduous. On the other hand it gave him an opportunity to increase and consolidate his military prestige, and, always with the determination to return to the Sudan later, and with heightened authority, he telegraphed in cypher to Wingate, who happened to be in Cairo, that he was leaving for South Africa and that Wingate was to succeed him, and started secretly for Alexandria. At Alexandria he embarked for Malta on the *Isis* and changed at Malta to the *Dido*. On the 26th the *Dido* rushed through the Straits of Gibraltar, and on December 27th, 1899, nine days after receiving his orders at Khartum, as the *Dunottar Castle* bearing

Lord Roberts, put into Gibraltar, a naval launch approached, signalling "Do not stop engines". The *Dunottar Castle* slowed down, Kitchener came on board and the journey to Cape Town was resumed.

* * * * *

Lord Wolseley had just retired but his contemporary Sir Evelyn Wood was now Quartermaster-General at the War Office. One can imagine the old war horse of the Crimea, of the Ashantee, Kaffir, Zulu and Transvaal wars, wearer of the Victoria Cross, sitting in his office scenting the battle from afar and longing to be there. One day Sir Coleridge Grove, the Military Secretary, came to him and asked him if he would go to South Africa under Kitchener. Wood says in his "Memoirs" that he took two hours to think it over. He had been a Major-General for some years whilst Kitchener was still a lieutenant, and it was he who had rescued Kitchener from the monotony of his life at Cyprus. Now he was being asked to act as Kitchener's subordinate. There was no envy in his nature, but to accept would go rather against the grain. However, he felt that it was his duty to go and he accepted, giving Sir Coleridge his reasons for hesitating. He felt that he had been placed in a difficult position. Kitchener, however, rescued him from it. In answer to a telegram from the War Office to the effect that Sir Evelyn was coming out, Kitchener telegraphed a reply saying that "while he would be delighted to serve under Sir Evelyn Wood, he felt that he ought not to have him under his command". This telegram was shown to Sir Evelyn

and he was very grateful for it. Eight months later he wrote to Kitchener :

“ October 1st, 1901.

My dear Kitchener,

As I am now out of office, I can unburden my mind on a subject on which I have long desired to write to you, but I did not feel justified in doing so when I was Adjutant-General. I saw a very generous telegram from you relative to the proposition that I should go to South Africa to serve under your orders. I do not suppose you would ever have thought that I was doing anything to try to inconvenience you in any way, but I should like you to know from me that the suggestion that I should go out did not emanate from me in any way, as you will see by the answer I gave to Sir Coleridge Grove when the proposition was made. Please regard this as confidential between you and,

Yours sincerely,

WOOD.”

* * * * *

The task of the English in their war with the Orange Free State and the South African Republic was, as in the Sudan, a struggle with two enemies, nature and man. In the Sudan, nature was the more formidable foe, in South Africa, man. The story of the former with its dramatic setting, the mysterious and sinister desert, the colour and pageantry of the East, the wildness and passion of oriental fanaticism enacted on a stage set with

reminders of an immemorial past, was the more fascinating, that of the latter, played out on the wide veldt or amongst the rocky kopjes, loose sand and arid stretches of the karroo country, against a determined and slippery enemy, the more stubborn and heartbreaking.

Of the relations between Roberts and Kitchener during the former's command in South Africa, Sir George Arthur says: "The combination was admirable and proved wholly workable, although the precise relations between the two, as officially defined, were not in practice rigidly maintained. It will be remembered that in 1899 there was in England no Staff organization designed for the conduct of War, the work of the Staff being regulated purely by the exigencies of peace administration, and it had been the practice, on the outbreak of one of our little wars, for an Expeditionary Force to be organized for the occasion in brigades and divisions from battalions and regiments which had not been trained collectively, and for each Commander-in-Chief to select his own Staff. There was, therefore, no established practice of Staff work in the field, and the idiosyncrasies of each Commander-in-Chief dictated the general method of command. In India Roberts had been in the habit of preparing and issuing his orders with the help of a few carefully selected personal assistants and had not availed himself of a chief-of-staff as such an officer would be employed today. Kitchener was not, or certainly was not used as, chief of the Headquarters Staff in the more recent sense of the title. His normal role was less that of translating the Commander-in-Chief's views and wishes into orders than that of acting as *legatus a latere*, despatched from Headquarters with

authority to represent the supreme command, a position altogether outside the functions of a Staff Officer as later prescribed."

The first ninety days of the South African War show a continuous record of disastrous reverses for the British Armies and at the close of this period, Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley were besieged, a bloody defeat had been sustained at the Modder River, and Gatacre at Stromberg, Methuen at Magersfontein and Buller at Colenso, had all been soundly beaten, but within a month after the arrival of Roberts, events, for a time at least, took a more favourable turn. Kimberley (where Rhodes was raising his high-pitched querulous voice alternately appealing for immediate help, or complaining of General Kekewich who, being in command, insisted on commanding), was relieved on February 15th, 1900; on the 27th Cronje was caught at Paardeberg and forced to surrender; on the 28th the siege of Ladysmith was raised; on March 13th the British occupied Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State; during the same month Kitchener suppressed the first revolt in Cape Colony; on May 17th Mafeking was relieved; on the 31st Johannesburg was relieved; on June 5th Pretoria, capital of the South African Republic was occupied; in October Kruger fled to Europe and on November 29th, 1900, Lord Roberts turning the command over to Kitchener left for England, announcing incautiously that the war was practically over.

It was to last two and a half years longer.

Kitchener's unsuccessful attack on Cronje at Paardeberg aroused an immense amount of adverse criticism,

but *The Times* "History of the South African War", and the German histories agree that he was right in making the attempt. After the first failure Kitchener wished to shell Cronje's laager, but Roberts from ill-judged motives of humanity refused to allow it. He agreed to it after the lapse of ten days, when Cronje's surrender followed immediately, but ten precious days had been lost.

Arthur says: "As Kitchener foresaw, the investment of Cronje protracted over several days, gave the burghers of the Free State just the breathing time that they required, and they were able with revived courage to muster anew their forces, now strengthened by the late besiegers of Ladysmith, for opposing Roberts' march to Bloemfontein. The shock of the relief of Kimberley and of the rounding up of Cronje passed off, and the threatened collapse of the Free State resistance was averted by the personal exertions of Kruger [President of the South African Republic] and Steyn [President of the Orange Free State]. Thus, to the delay at Paardeberg may be ascribed the still longer delay when Bloemfontein was reached. Nor did investment as opposed to assault, prove in the long run any economy of life. British forces lay around the laager drinking the waters of the Modder fouled by the rotting carcasses of Cronje's slaughtered horses and oxen, and the filth from the camps washed into the river by the rain which fell after the first attack. The stench in the laager at the time of Cronje's surrender was so overpowering as to overcome all save the most hardy of the victors, and when Bloemfontein was reached, the poison in the blood of the troops broke out in an

epidemic of enteric which accounted for many more lives than were lost in the assault on Cronje's lines."

Kitchener was kept in the field almost constantly until Lord Roberts' departure. He was quite indifferent to danger, not from any motive of bravado, but from his habit of complete absorption in the matter in hand. However, he realized the risk. In Egypt in 1888, after he had been wounded, Jusserand asked him whether he did not now feel secure having paid his debt to bad luck. He answered, "Not at all; I had a vague impression that bullets were not for me; I know now that they are". Still, day after day, taking the soldier's chance, he would ride about under fire without a sign that he was aware of it. Once only during the battle of Paardeberg, when the rifle fire was so heavy that even the horses were uneasy, did he caution his staff not to ride so close together. During this period he was not content to receive reports but must always be on the spot, day or night, to judge for himself, an example which might have been followed to advantage by some of the staff officers during the Great War. He thought very little about what he had to eat or drink, and would take whatever his A.D.C's. offered him, hardly noticing what it was. One of the Rothschilds had sent him twelve dozen cases of miniature bottles of very fine old brandy, each bottle containing about a wineglassful. His A.D.C's., Hamilton, Watson, Gorringe and Cowan, who had been with him in the Sudan and knew his ways, used to carry a supply of these and offer him a glass when they thought he needed it. Beyond this he drank nothing, except occasionally one whisky and soda at night. He also liked the

tinned Paysandu ox tongue, but the one thing he craved above all else was fresh milk and to provide this a cow and its calf driven by a kaffir boy on a pony would follow him and his staff all day to be on hand when he bivouacked for the night. This practice had been followed in the Sudan and on one occasion when the Sirdar's cow was following him on a Nile boat, it fell or jumped overboard and swam to the very island on which the Mahdi had been born. The flotilla came to a halt and waited whilst a company of Sudanese was landed to round it up.

His mail continued to be as vast and varied as in London and his staff in return for freeing him from the burden of going through it, were allowed to share the wares sent to him by London tradesmen, boots, gaiters, waterproof coats, a great variety of objects. The Duke of Portland sent him three well-bred weight-carrying chargers which were of great value to him as he had not had time to bring his Arab horses from Egypt with him. It was at this time that his correspondence with Queen Victoria began, which continued until her death.

VII

SECOND PHASE. CONCENTRATION CAMPS. THE
MIDDLEBURG NEGOTIATIONS. KITCHENER'S DIS-
APPOINTMENT. THE BLOCKHOUSE SYSTEM.
VEREENIGING. PEACE.

AFTER the annexation of the Transvaal on October 25th, 1900, it was announced that Lord Roberts would return home, but his departure was delayed by illness and it was not until November 29th that he went south and Kitchener took over the command. During September and October little or nothing had been effected by Lord Roberts, who remained inactive at Pretoria whilst the Boers gradually recovered from the severe hustling they had received. During November things had been going steadily from bad to worse and it was a common saying at the time that the only man in South Africa who believed the war to be over was Lord Roberts himself. "The vitality of the Boer forces at this time may be gauged by the boldness of their plan of campaign which it fell to Kitchener to frustrate: this was to invade Cape Colony with various detached columns which were to unite and advance on Cape Town, whilst Botha with five thousand picked horsemen entered Natal and made a dash on Durban. Amongst the British forces disorganization

was widespread, the troops scattered about or concentrated on no precisely ascertainable principle, important strategic points often not held and isolated garrisons offering tempting opportunities to the enemy. It may be fairly questioned whether any British general in the past had ever been confronted by such a grave and complex problem as South Africa presented in December, 1901.

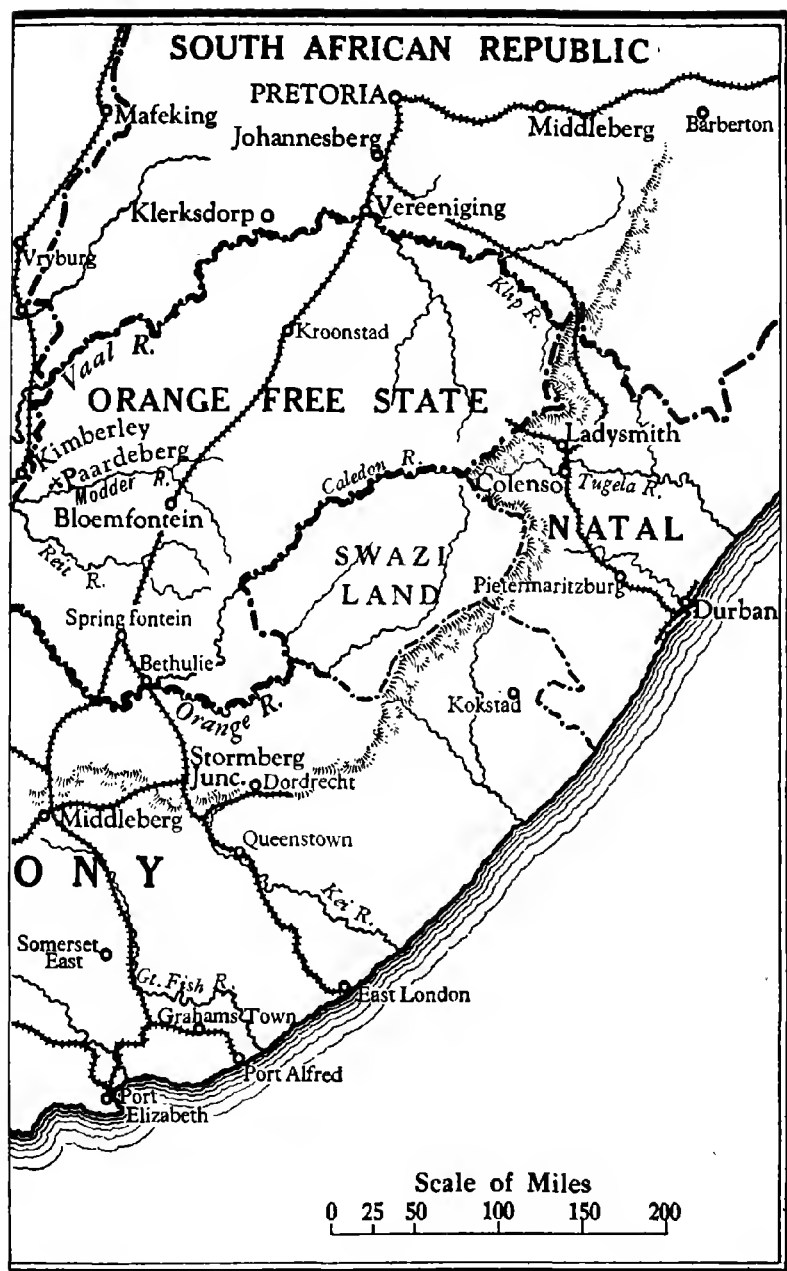
"When Kitchener succeeded to the command, even after deducting the 15,000 prisoners of war and the five to six thousand men who had fallen in the campaign or had been interned in Portuguese territory, there were still in the field about 60,000 Boers, foreigners and rebels. On the British side the total number of troops, amounting when Kitchener took command to some 210,000 men, was overwhelming only on paper. Nearly 100,000 were disseminated along the railways upon almost purely passive duties and many thousands more were inmured in isolated garrisons. Large numbers were detained at the coast towns and at depots, or were employed upon escorts, guards, safe-conducts and other minor duties, and casualties and sickness were a constant drain.

"Kitchener attacked the complex problems with which he had to deal with thoroughness and courage. Where vitality was lacking in the army he infused fresh spirit. Either personally, or by deputy, he raided the clubs, hotels and rest camps and sent off officers and men to the front in creditable numbers. To meet the most urgent want of all, that of mounted men, he appealed at once through the Government to all parts of the Empire. To this and every other appeal there came

GERMAN
SOUTH WEST
AFRICA

BECHUANALAND





a hearty response, but the organization and despatch of reinforcements took time and there was an immense dearth of the necessary material for officers. By Kitchener's express desire, men, as soon as they were ready, were shipped to South Africa to receive horses, training and equipment there. This was a wise decision, but to meet the urgent need for mounted troops most of the drafts were distributed immediately. A result was that parties of these half-trained men constantly fell an easy prey to the enemy ; nevertheless, in relation to the great risk run, it is wonderful how little ill resulted.

"Not until April of the next year did Kitchener regain the initiative in any real sense. All he could do was to inculcate energy, to hold his ground patiently and doggedly, and to use every short breathing space for such returns to the offensive as were feasible. Problems multiplied as time went on. The regular organization of the army under the new conditions was obsolete. How was it to be manipulated ? Was devolution or centralization to be the rule. In meeting emergencies he did what seemed to him to be the expedient thing regardless of tradition and precedent. He hoped at first to make his will effective through eight or ten senior men who would interpret his general directions and the machinery of war in systematic fashion, but circumstances warred against this system. So long as the Boers remained dispersed, it operated well enough, but as soon as they coalesced and undertook big enterprises, it broke down. In these circumstances we find Kitchener descending upon the scene of disturbance, superseding local commanders, choosing on the spur of the moment and regardless of seniority the best men

he could find, robbing distant districts of columns for the benefit of the threatened area and, when he had started the new machinery, returning to await the result.

"He went further, interweaving operations, sending orders, sometimes to the generals in charge, sometimes even directly to the generals' subordinates. To the old school such interference was anathema; yet there were strong reasons to be urged for it. In a silent distant room, linked up by telegraph to every post and garrison in the country, sensible of the slightest shock at the remotest extremity, the Commander-in-Chief was often better able to judge of a situation than his lieutenant on the spot immersed in the immediate object at hand, groping somewhat blindly perhaps in a remote and difficult region and out of touch with the strategic point of view of the higher command. In every great undertaking, military or civil, men are apt to follow the same rule, of devolving when they can trust their subordinates, and centralizing when they cannot.

"During the last half of the war he not only conducted military operations of a most complex character, on the largest scale, over a huge area of country, but he had in addition to deal with innumerable subsidiary questions of vast magnitude, the care and feeding of tens of thousands of women and children in the concentration camps, the creation of a constabulary, the administration of military and martial law over the immense territories in military occupation, the intricate problems of native labour, the management of the railways, the return of the loyalist population, driven out by the Boers at the commencement of the war, and the resumption of the gold mining industry."¹⁵

Kitchener paid little or no attention to his personal accounts, barely glancing at them when shown him by one of his A.D.C's., but not one penny of Government money could be spent without the most careful scrutiny. Someone said about the South African War that if it had gone on a year longer Kitchener would have declared a dividend. His passion for economy sometimes went to extremes. After peace was signed he directed Sir Ian Hamilton as Chief-of-Staff to issue an order that all loot captured from ex-enemies should be at once handed over to Headquarters. The valuables, whatever they might be, were then to be auctioned and the proceeds to go to swell the Field Force Canteen surplus. Lord Kitchener was very keen about this order. Directly it came out, Woolls-Sampson, who had organized the Imperial Light Horse and had had a distinguished war record, wrote to Sir Ian, "I have a pony which is the apple of my eye". Sir Ian says: "He went on to suggest that if he had been of any small service to the Empire he might be given formal permission by me as Chief-of-Staff to keep it. My pen was actually dipped in the ink to write down 'Yes' when who should come into my office at that very moment but the great K. himself, and I was ass enough to ask him. What a mistake. He was in that mood which lay out of reach of the arts of persuasion. 'No', cried K. 'Tell him to go to the devil, but tell him at the same time he can buy back the pony if he likes.' This he said hoping that thus the price of the pony might be raised a few shillings by the bidding. Such was K. In vain did I protest, 'Woolls-Sampson stands by himself and will form no precedent—he has

not drawn a penny of pay for his services and the State owes him more than it can ever repay'. 'No', repeated K. 'We can't make any exceptions'."

It may be that Kitchener regretted this action, for a week before leaving South Africa he publicly acknowledged Woolls-Sampson's services in a speech at Johannesburg.

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"The treatment of the civil population became a critical question. To strike at an enemy's sources of supply is and must be one of the principal aims of the belligerent. The regular sources of supply once possessed by the Boers, towns, railways, magazines, all or nearly all, had been lost. Their new base was the farm-house and all appertaining thereto, and the destruction of these resources on military grounds became an absolutely legitimate aim, but a question whose difficulty and magnitude was not at first realized had begun to declare itself. Nearly all the farms were inhabited by women and children and it was not possible that they should be left to the chance of starvation or the tender mercies of the Kaffirs. Thus the removal of the families to a place of safety, where they could be fed from British resources, was inevitable. Camps for non-combatants were therefore growing up at many military bases on the lines of communication. At first they were small and not a source of much embarrassment, but the difficulties inherent in their expansion were of altogether unsuspected gravity. Too much reliance was placed on the capacity for self-help to be shown by the Boers themselves and the Boers proved to be

helpless, utterly averse to cleanliness and ignorant of the simplest elements of sanitation and medicine. The result was that for a certain period there was a very high mortality among these unfortunate people.

"Farm after farm was visited and its non-combatants transported to centres where they were fed and educated by their enemies. The policy of depopulation at first caused the British great embarrassment and the burghers made political capital of the sufferings of their women and children. In part their complaints were insincere for it is abundantly clear that they were heartily glad to be relieved of the responsibility for the maintenance of their families and would not on any account have resumed the burden, but in part the complaints were well grounded. The death-rate, especially among children, was terribly high. During the early months of 1901 the evil grew without much general recognition, but in June in consequence of the reports of Miss Emily Hobhouse considerable agitation was caused in England. The truth was that while the concentration camps caused far less misery and loss than would have been suffered had the families remained on the veldt, the way in which the work was carried out was open to much criticism."⁴⁷ This was eventually recognised and a commission of ladies under the presidency of Mrs. Fawcett was appointed by the War Office to investigate the matter and left England in July.

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Mrs. Fawcett and her committee, urging the necessity of a more varied diet in the camps, saw Lord Milner. Lord Milner was sympathetic but pointed out that as

the measures urged by Mrs. Fawcett would require extra railway trucks, and as the allocation of such trucks was a military matter, the final decision would rest with Lord Kitchener. The committee, then in Pretoria, wrote to Lord Kitchener asking for an interview. A reply was received from Sir John Maxwell on Lord Kitchener's behalf saying that Lord Kitchener would receive two members of the committee on a certain day. The ladies attributed this decision to the erroneous legend that Kitchener was a woman-hater, but as Kitchener was a very busy man he no doubt felt that two members of the committee would take up less of his time than six. The committee accepted the inevitable and when Sir John Maxwell called with a carriage at the appointed time, Mrs. Fawcett and Lady Knox accompanied him to Lord Kitchener's house, the remaining four drawing what consolation they could from the consciousness that they had unselfishly foregone an exciting experience for the common good.

On arriving at Lord Kitchener's house, they were ushered into a large square hall whilst Sir John Maxwell disappeared into an adjoining room. He left the door ajar and through the open doorway they heard him announce them and a voice ask anxiously in reply.

"Are there only two?"

Reassured on this point they were shown into his room and there followed, according to Mrs. Fawcett, the most satisfactory and businesslike interview she had ever had, Kitchener listening carefully to what they had to say and immediately agreeing to give them what they wanted. Mrs. Fawcett says: "Not an unnecessary word was spoken and therefore no time

wasted. I liked him far better than any of the politicians I had gone to on deputations in London.”⁴⁸

The impression they created must on the other hand have been agreeable, for a day or two later all six were asked to dine with Kitchener and the four unselfish ones had their reward.

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“From October onwards the condition of the camps steadily improved. Doctors and trained nurses were sent out in large numbers and steps were taken to reduce the camps in size and increase them in numbers. Excellent work was done in the education of the children. In October it was calculated that two-thirds of the children of school age were on the school rolls, besides a great number of adults. To sum up, the administration of the camps and their maintenance in the midst of a great war under conditions whose difficulty can scarcely be exaggerated was a colossal undertaking carried out on the whole with wonderful success, and toward the end the Boers themselves realized the essential humanity of the concentration system. The embarrassment and anxiety caused the Boers by the helpless non-combatants still in their midst was to grow day by day, and at the Vereeniging conference Botha himself said, ‘Today we are only too glad to know that our women and children are under British protection’. The wretchedness of those who remained on the veldt became indeed a powerful argument for submission.”⁴⁹

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“Hand in hand with depopulation went devastation,

This was a well-nigh interminable process. Cattle and sheep were captured by tens of thousands, grain past computation was seized or destroyed, standing crops were burnt and mills and farm buildings gutted."

* * * *

"No man was better fitted than Kitchener to grapple the complicated problems involved in the conquest of South Africa and to bring the war to a triumphant close. It was not as a strategist or a tactician that Kitchener had risen to distinction. He was pre-eminently a great organizer. To view the guerilla war which had developed mainly as a problem of organization was in his blood and to attack the problem on those lines elicited the best of his genius. When he assumed command, moreover, some such treatment was pre-eminently demanded. A theatre of war so vast as to stagger imagination, scattered over it a nimble enemy strong in his very weakness, in the midst, bewildered and powerless, like Gulliver in the toils of the Lilliputians, an army which had suddenly awoken to find its methods and constitution painfully obsolete, and behind all a public opinion sensitive to losses and yet impatient for the end.

"Kitchener meted out reforms with no sparing hand, and these reforms all bore the same stamp. With an iron will, immense powers of industry, memory and concentration, of a nature imperious and self-reliant, he built up, dealing masterfully with plastic material, an effectively organized system centralized absolutely in himself. The merits of this system, if we consider the needs and tendencies of the hour, excelled its defects,

but its defects were inherent in its character and were never successfully eliminated. The structure grew in size and complexity, columns multiplied, drives became vaster in scope, more elaborate, more ingenious, the whole manipulated from a central office; but it distinctly resembled a machine rather than a living organism.”¹⁰

In his choice of commanders Kitchener was fearless, observant and impartial. He took young, active and capable men from any branch of the service. If brilliance was rare, incompetence was rare. It was a hard school in which these men practised and from it graduated those heroes who were to figure more or less successfully on the stage of the world's great catastrophe a dozen years later. “Distinction was not to be won without a keen effort and even the most ambitious and resourceful leader found himself for weeks together beating the air while the moral strain never relaxed. It is true that an officer could count on recognition in success and a generous allowance for failure. Kitchener more than once in the teeth of strong pressure from outside refused to disgrace good men who had made mistakes, but in some instances he permitted to flourish undisturbed that kind of calculated inaction which is far more harmful in the long run than rashness or imprudence.

“These were but the consequences of Kitchener's isolation at the head of a great military structure. He assumed the whole weight of responsibility and wielded absolute supremacy. Not that he was unequal to the strain. Besides an iron constitution he had the rare gift of equanimity.”¹¹ The irritability of earlier days

had disappeared. "Under a burden which would have crushed a smaller man he preserved a serene and confident spirit and he transmitted this confidence to the army, the government and the nation. All recognized in him a great and commanding personality, not indeed above criticism but compelling trust. He had no rivals and there was never a moment when his fitness for the high place he occupied was not manifest and unquestioned.

"In November, 1901, the blockhouse system, though it had scarcely begun to affect the progress of the war, was in full course of development, but to the fighting Boers it was still an object of ridicule rather than of fear. It was only by degrees that they awoke to the realization that they were being taken like flies in a spider's web. If the meshes of the web could be torn at any given point by a sufficiently strong effort, the throttling effect of the web as a whole continued to increase. Communication became difficult, concentrations on a large scale impossible. Conversely every new blockhouse became an additional artery of safe communication, feeding depots far afield in areas hitherto barely accessible."⁶ Sir Ian Hamilton, in writing to Lord Roberts, said that although he had read much of the blockhouses he never could have imagined such a gigantic system of fortifications, barriers, traps and garrisons as actually existed. "Finally, by a revolution in the handling of the field army, a way was found of scouring and ransacking those areas more drastically and systematically than had been possible before. Though they struggled tooth and nail to escape from the toils, though they countered

the new methods with bold originality and undiminished pluck, there finally stole over the Boers a sense of impotence and exhaustion; turn where they would, struggle as they might, they felt the irresistible pressure of a conquering will.”¹

On February 13th, 1901, Louis Botha received through his wife a verbal message from Kitchener suggesting a conference. A reply was despatched the same day but was not received by Kitchener until the 22nd. Botha suggested Middleburg as a meeting-place and Kitchener accepted. In spite of the express conditions laid down by Kitchener and implicitly accepted in Botha's letter, Botha began by asking that the Republics should retain some sort of independence. Kitchener refused to discuss the point. At the end of the meeting, which was conducted in a very friendly and reasonable spirit, Botha took his departure and the terms of a proposed settlement were drawn up in the shape of a draft letter from the British to the Boer general. This letter was submitted to Milner who met Kitchener at Bloemfontein and was sent by him to the Home Government for approval. The attempt (known as the Middleburg conference) failed principally because the Cabinet, backed by Milner, refused amnesty to the Cape Colony rebels. Britain demanded unconditional surrender. On March 22nd, Kitchener, writing to Brodrick, said :

“ I did all in my power to urge Milner to change his views, which on this subject seem very narrow. I feel certain and have good grounds for knowing, that an amnesty or King's pardon for the two or

three thousand rebels in question (carrying disfranchisement with it, which Botha willingly accepted) would be extremely popular amongst the majority of the British and all the Dutch in South Africa, but there exists a small section in both Colonies who are opposed to any conciliatory measures being taken to end the war and I feel their influence is paramount ; they want extermination and I suppose will get it.

My views were that once the Boers gave up their independence and laid down their arms, the main object of the Government was attained, and that the future civil administration would soon bring the people together again. . . . Milner's views may be strictly just but to my mind they are vindictive. . . . We are now carrying the war on to put two or three hundred Dutchmen in prison at the end of it. It seems to me absurd and wrong.”⁶⁴

The war, therefore, went on, but a year and a week after the breaking off of the Middleburg negotiations, Schalk Berger, acting president of the South African Republic, requested a safe conduct for himself and other members of his Government, into the British lines and signified his desire for a meeting with the Orange Free State with a view to framing, in concert with them, a proposal for peace. “The safe conduct was granted and then began the strangest preliminary arrangements for the negotiations that ever took place. For the Boers to collect persons qualified to discuss these matters the active goodwill of their enemies was necessary. De Wet was within tolerably easy reach,

President Steyn was in the Western Transvaal, Botha was 250 miles away, Smuts 600 miles to the west. Kitchener assisted the Boer officials to find and assemble their friends whilst prosecuting the war with unabated vigour.”⁶⁶

At Klerksdorp the Transvaal and Free State Governments met on April 9th, 1901. Lord Kitchener was requested to meet the Governments in order to receive from them a proposal of peace. The request, sent by telegram, was promptly granted and the same evening the delegates travelled to Pretoria. In the morning they met in a room in Kitchener's house. Kestell, chaplain to President Steyn, who was present, says of Kitchener at this meeting: “It struck me that he had piercing eyes that apparently strove to penetrate the person on whom they were fixed. Those who had seen him before said that he had become very thin. He had grown grey and wrinkles were beginning to show on his forehead. He looked pale and seemed to show signs of fatigue.”⁶⁶ The delegates again demanded independence. Kitchener entreated them to abandon all thoughts of independence, urged submission and promised self-government. The presidents of the two republics declared that they had no constitutional power to make them abandon their claims for independence. Kitchener at last as a matter of form transmitted their demand to the British Government, but warned the delegates that the answer was a foregone conclusion. The British reply was as he expected. No proposals based on independence would be entertained.

On the 14th a second meeting took place. The

presidents still insisted that without consulting the people they had no power to negotiate on any other basis than that of independence but asked the British Government on its part to submit proposals. Britain replied that she was still prepared to accept a general surrender on the lines of the offer made to General Botha at the Middleburg conference, "but with such modifications in detail as may mutually be agreed upon".

The final outcome of these meetings was that Kitchener agreed to grant such facilities as were indispensable for the arrangement of a convention of delegates. It was agreed that sixty burghers, thirty from each country, were to be chosen to voice the will of the people. They were to have free use of the railways and telegraph and military operations were to be so conducted as to allow the holding of meetings all over the country. From the eleventh of May immunity was promised to all commandos whose leaders should be chosen as delegates. On May 15th these delegates were to meet at Vereeniging.

"History records no precedent for the state of affairs which existed in South Africa between April 18th, the date on which the Boer delegate parted from Kitchener at Pretoria, and May 15th. War went on but Kitchener loyally carried out his undertakings to the Boer leaders. Commandos were allowed to assemble and confer unmolested, Boer officers and messengers scoured the country by road and railway with free passes, going and coming through British outpost lines and receiving unstinted hospitality from their foes, but, if Kitchener kept his compact, outside its strict limits he prosecuted

the war with ruthless energy. Delicate matter as it was to dovetail warlike measures with peaceful deliberations, the feat was successfully accomplished and from far and wide the delegates elected by the commandos travelled to the meeting-place."⁸⁷

On the 15th of May, 1902, a cold, misty morning, the sixty delegates came together at Vereeniging. Two camps, one for each State, had been pitched in close proximity, and between them stood a large marquee, in which the convention was to be held. On the 17th, after lengthy discussions, a commission consisting of Botha, de Wet, de la Rey, Hertzog and Smuts was chosen to go to Pretoria and negotiate with Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner and on the morning of the 19th they met at Kitchener's house. The committee then read the proposals of the delegates at Vereeniging, in which they asked for partial independence. Kitchener replied that there must be a complete surrender of independent existence. Discussions continued and finally, on May 28th, a draft proposal was handed to the Commissioners by Lord Milner with the statement that the terms laid down in it were final and that they must be accepted or refused within three days. That evening the Commissioners returned to Vereeniging to report to the delegates and speeches and debates again went on endlessly amongst the delegates without any agreement being reached.

It is a strange fact that although Kitchener had ravaged their country, herded their women and children by tens of thousands into concentration camps, burnt their crops, houses and barns, captured and destroyed their sheep and cattle, and pursued the Boers themselves

with ruthless energy until they were practically without clothing and without food, they felt no hatred for him. On the contrary, their feeling toward him was one of reluctant admiration and trust, and on the evening of May 29th, after a day of inconclusive discussion, some of the delegates took Major Leggett, who was at Vereeniging at the time, to one side and said :

“ If we knew that Lord Kitchener would stay on in South Africa as Governor-General for two years, or even for a year, we are sure that the delegates would vote for peace.”

This statement seemed of such importance to Leggett that he went at once to the railway station, commandeered an engine and started for Pretoria, seventy miles away, reaching Kitchener's house in the early hours of the morning. Kitchener was in bed when Leggett was shown into his room. A small night-light which he always kept burning was standing on a table beside him. He sat up as Leggett entered, asking :

“ Have they decided to sign ? ”

Leggett repeated the delegates' statement and Kitchener, according to his wont, remained silent for a long time, turning the matter over in his mind whilst still sitting up in bed. At last he said :

“ It is impossible. The Government would not, nor should it, consent to the removal of Lord Milner.”

Leggett returned to Vereeniging and the Boers went on with their deliberations. It was not until the morning of the 31st that by a vote of fifty-four to six they decided to accept the inevitable. That evening the members appointed to represent the delegates arrived at Pretoria.

Kitchener, advised of their coming, notified Lord Milner and asked him to be at his house at a certain hour. This was an hour later than the delegates were to arrive. Kitchener feared Milner's not always tactful and somewhat unsympathetic manner. Haldane, speaking of the disputes which led up to the war, says of Milner, "He was a man of most attractive qualities but was difficult to work with. I came at the end to wish that the negotiations before the war had been in the hands of a man of more diplomatic temperament, and of qualities like those of Kitchener".

What passed between Kitchener and the Boer leaders during that hour is not recorded, but Hamilton says that even at the last moment Milner, after his arrival, came near to causing a rupture by some remark to which de la Rey took offence. De la Rey sprang from his chair as if to leave the room, but Kitchener made him sit down again by saying :

"Delegates cannot act so hastily. It is not civilized."

So overpowering was the force of Kitchener's personality when aroused that the fiery de la Rey, taking his seat, answered humbly :

"Your excellency has been in many wars and many countries. Your excellency knows best the manners and customs of the world."⁸⁸

When the treaty was at last signed at eleven o'clock that night, Kitchener shook hands with each, saying :

"We are good friends now."

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And so, fifteen months after the conclusion of the abortive conference at Middleburg, the war came to

an end. Campbell-Bannerman, according to Spender, "Strongly held that its [the war's] continuance in its later phases was due to the stubborn unwisdom which had refused the concessions that General Botha had asked for in his negotiations with Lord Kitchener [at Middleburg]. Not for a moment did he accept the plea that these negotiations had broken down because the Boers would accept nothing but complete independence. It was in his view inevitable that they should say so after the breakdown, for any less spirited attitude would have been fatal to their fighting efficiency, but the fact that they said it offered no proof that a different handling of the negotiations, and especially the offer of an amnesty for the Cape rebels, would not have produced peace".¹ Botha's opinion was that if the amnesty for which he asked had been conceded, he could have ended the war in March, 1901, on practically the same terms as were negotiated in May of the following year.

On June 6th, H. W. Nevinson interviewed Kitchener. "He spoke with much hesitation and long pauses of absolute silence. He thought the Peace was really pleasing to both sides, especially to the Boers, who were coming in well from the commandos, but were naturally touchy on what people said to them and the terms. De Wet had been very expressive in his loyalty to the change, declaring that a Boer must be one thing or the other, and that now he was a British subject. He thought the Boers a very strange people with strongly mixed qualities but hoped all would go well if the present feelings were maintained and there came no frost to blight it. The

enemies of today often proved to be the friends of tomorrow.”⁸⁰

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On June 8th a religious service was held in the big square of Pretoria. Kitchener insisted on having Kipling's "Recessional" sung to the tune of "Almighty Father, Strong to Save", perhaps the first time that it was ever sung at a religious service, and when objections were raised, said he would have what he liked on that occasion. After "God Save The King", mounting a dais, he called for three cheers for His Majesty, which were given with a will, and when someone shouted, "Cheers for Kitchener", the whole square went wild. "Helmets, hats and caps flew into the air or were waved on the muzzles of rifles. The troops and the people cheered as though they could never stop, and the shouting went on long after Kitchener himself had disappeared into the Government buildings behind him. There stood the men who had marched so far and fought so well, and now the very end had come. Never again would they meet together for common service in battle or in trek. The war was over, the dead were numbered, the task of the Army was accomplished."⁸¹

VIII

THE CORONATION OF EDWARD VII. INDIA.

THE CLASH WITH CURZON.

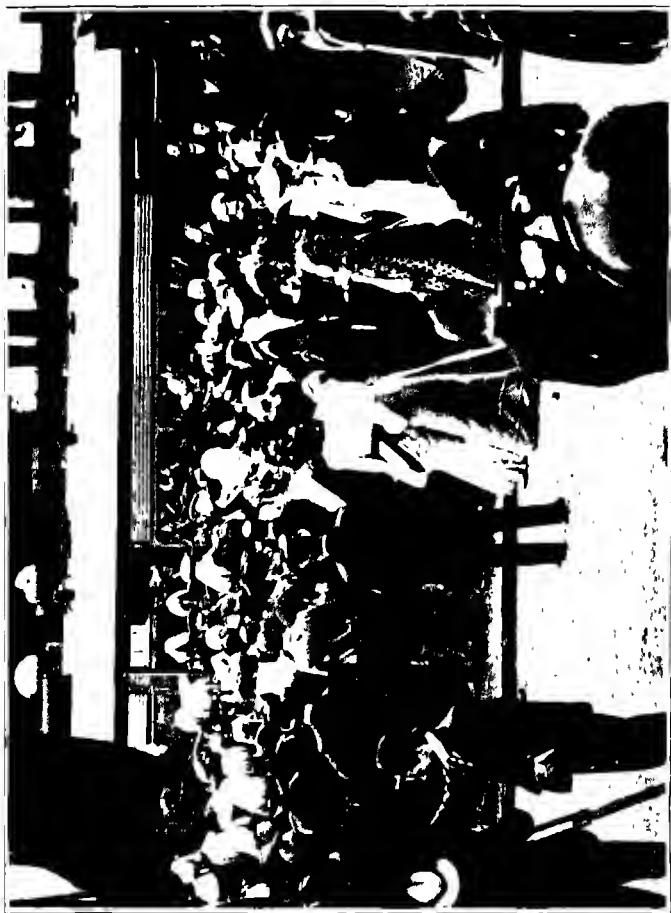
ON June 23rd, 1902, the *Orotava*, moving slowly across the blue waters of Table Bay, passed out to sea. Gradually the surf thundering against the rocky shores of the Cape of Good Hope, the massed buildings of the city, the villas and bungalows of the upper slopes and the grandiose outline of Table Mountain sank from view and South Africa was left behind. Across the plains the "last post" had sounded unnumbered times, but now the bugles were silent, another war was over and Kitchener and his generals, watching the receding shores and mourning no doubt those who were left behind—Kitchener had wept on hearing of the death in battle of le Gallais, one of his old comrades—set their faces toward the north.

Kitchener was now fifty-two. In 1892 he had received his appointment as Sirdar of the Egyptian Army and during the ten years that followed he had conducted two arduous and victorious campaigns unexampled for their difficulties and complexities, and had added to the British Empire in the Sudan and South Africa five million square miles, a continent with all its attendant races, religions, resources and opportunities. His labours in these two enormous tasks had been almost continuous, often carried out under conditions

of the utmost discomfort and privation and one would have thought that now he would have been ready for a rest, but Kitchener possessed immense powers of recuperation. It is true he had his periods of exhaustion during which he was a victim of black depression, as when he wrote to a friend about this time, "I sometimes wish I could get a bullet through my brain as some of my best friends have had",** but they were of short duration ; brief periods of rest were all that were needed to restore his vitality, and he was already thinking of the future.

During the voyage home, England and the Empire had been passing through a period of dramatic surprises and suspense. The day before the *Orotava* left Cape Town, the King who had that day left Windsor for London, driving in open carriages with the Queen and his suite from Paddington to the Palace, was suddenly taken ill. This was three days before the date set for his coronation. A consultation was hurriedly held, his illness diagnosed as an acute attack of appendicitis and an operation was immediately performed by Sir Frederick Treves. During the early days of Kitchener's voyage the public read with apprehension the bulletins which the doctors issued, but by the time the *Orotava* neared England the King was well on his way to recovery and attention could be transferred to the arrival of the hero of the South African War.

On Friday, July 11th, Lord Roberts proceeded to Southampton to welcome the conqueror. Word, however, had been received that the *Orotava* had only passed Ushant at half-past four that afternoon and would not reach Southampton until Saturday morning. At nine



LORD KITCHENER APRIL AT PADDINGTON ON HIS RETURN FROM
SOUTH AFRICA 12TH JULY 1902

o'clock the following morning as the *Orotava* docked at the Ocean Quay a group of officers in khaki could be seen standing on the deck. The ships lying in the harbour were dressed with flags. At nine-fifteen Kitchener descended the gangway and was driven through decorated streets, lined with troops, to the Hartley Institute where the Freedom of the Borough was conferred on him. At ten-forty he left for London, the train passing slowly through crowds of tightly packed humanity. In London nothing had been seen before resembling the manner of his reception. Arriving at Paddington he was met by the Prince of Wales and drove with him through congested streets hung with draperies of flags, lined with troops from every quarter of the Empire, amid an incessant roar of cheering from the throats of unnumbered thousands, to luncheon at St. James's Palace. From there he went to the sick-room of the King at Buckingham Palace to receive from his hand the Order of Merit, and from Buckingham Palace at last once more to the house of his old friend Pandeli Ralli. Parliament voted him a grant of fifty thousand pounds, and he was raised to the rank of Viscount.

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On August 9th the King, having sufficiently recovered, was crowned at the Abbey. The waiting crowds saw a pageantry which was not to be repeated at an English Coronation. They saw the gilded coaches of the King and the Lord Mayor, the procession of Indian Chiefs and Princes, they saw the troops, the soldiers and the statesmen, as they do to this day but on that occasion,

for the last time, the peers arrived in their ancient carriages of state drawn by superb horses richly caparisoned, with coachmen and footmen in white wigs and traditional liveries. At the Coronation of George the Fifth, motors had taken their places: and the servants, the horses and the coaches had vanished with a vanishing era.

In the Abbey, crowded with the representatives of the dignity and power of the Empire, a blaze of uniforms, jewels and robes of state under the vaulted roofs, surrounded by the tombs of the illustrious dead, the Archbishop of Canterbury administered the oath and anointed the head, breast and palms of the King with holy oil. The Monarch seated himself in the Coronation Chair above the Stone of Destiny and the peers shouted as with one voice, "May the King live forever!"

Amid this scene, wrapped around with the majestic symbols of the power and glory of the Empire to which he had given so many years, such toil and endeavour, it would not have been surprising if Kitchener had experienced a sudden sense of exaltation, a rush of pride, at the thought of what he had accomplished in its service.

The Holy Communion was administered to His Majesty and his Consort and the ceremony was over, but as they returned to the Palace the waiting crowds noticed that the King looked pale, haggard and exhausted.

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The year before, Kitchener had telegraphed Brodrick, Secretary of State for War, that he w

like the India command, the most coveted post in the British Army. Brodrick had answered :

“ I have known for some time that you wish to go to India and can assure you that so far as I can serve your wishes in any way, I will try to do so. But there is a very strong feeling, not only in the Cabinet but outside, that your presence at the War Office as soon as you can be spared from South Africa, would give much confidence. . . . The occasion is almost unique. The chance of reorganizing the Army is not likely to recur in your lifetime nor mine under similar conditions. You have the most recent and extended experience of any General in our service, or indeed in the world, of campaigns, since you have been at the centre both of the Egyptian and South African expeditions. If you should go to India we should scarcely be able to avail ourselves of your experience at all. . . . If it influences you at all I may say that I have not taken the War Office with a view to half measures. . . . You may not perhaps always have a Secretary of State who feels as strongly as I do the necessities of the case.”

And Haldane, speaking of the War Office in a speech at Dunbar in October, 1902, had said that, “ He despaired of it until they let loose in it somebody like Kitchener ”.

But Kitchener would have none of that vast and intricate machine. He wrote to a friend :

“ I would sooner sweep a crossing. . . . I have no intention of going to the War Office in any capacity, so if India goes to anyone else I shall have what I

really want, a good rest, and perhaps it will be the end of my military career. . . . If I am not fit for India I am not fit for anything else . . . but . . . I must not do what I wish but what is good for the country. I am quite willing to sacrifice myself if I can do good.”“

This was written during one of his fits of depression. But he persisted in his efforts and before he left South Africa the India command had been promised him. Some time later, however, Brodrick wrote to him, “After everyone has failed there will be a call for someone and you will not be able to avoid the War Office for ever”.

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During the South African campaign, Kitchener had heard rumours of antagonism in India between the Commander-in-Chief and the Military Member of the Viceroy's Cabinet. This friction had existed as far back as Lord Roberts' time and had been increasing in bitterness. General Smith-Dorrien, who had left South Africa in the spring of 1901 on his appointment as Adjutant-General in India, found his post so uncongenial that he offered his resignation to the then Commander-in-Chief, Sir Power Palmer. Sir Power begged him to stay on until Kitchener's arrival. Smith-Dorrien agreed to withdraw his resignation if Sir Power would allow him to go to England by the next mail and explain the situation to Lord Kitchener. Sir Power agreed and Smith-Dorrien departed.

It may be well to explain that the Viceroy's Council in India consisted of five members : one for the Home

Office, a legal member, a financial member, one for public works, and a military member. The Commander-in-Chief had a seat in the Council only by courtesy and it was at the option of the Secretary of State whether he was admitted to the Council at all. At this time the Military Member had acquired complete control of the ordnance, military works, remounts, supply, transport and pay departments. Over these departments, on which the efficiency of the Army so largely depended, the Commander-in-Chief had no authority whatever. The result was that military questions of which the Commander-in-Chief should be the best judge, were submitted to criticism by officers of lower rank and inferior military reputation.⁶⁶ It was to these matters that Smith-Dorrien, fresh from what he justly considered an unwarrantable defeat at the hands of the Military Member, called Kitchener's attention.

At this time Sir Walter Lawrence, Lord Curzon's private secretary and an Indian Civil Servant of many years' experience, happened to be in London. Kitchener also discussed the matter with him, explaining that his information was that the Military Member had "usurped some of the functions of the Commander-in-Chief". Sir Walter admitted that there was some truth in this but thought it was due to the accident that the Commander-in-Chief, Sir William Lockbart, had died and his successor, Sir Power Palmer, had only been a locum tenens. He thought that the balance of power would soon be restored when Kitchener arrived in India.

Lord George Hamilton, who had been Secretary of State for India for seven years and had lately resigned,

was at the time living at Deal Castle, that ancient fortress looking out over the Channel and built by Henry the Eighth, where the Earl of Ypres was to die twenty-three years later. Lord George, on his retirement, had been appointed its captain by the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. Kitchener, after his conversation with Smith-Dorrien and Sir Walter Lawrence, wrote Lord George, asking him if he might come to see him. Lord George asked Kitchener to Deal for a week-end and when their talk, which dealt with the Indian situation was finished, Kitchener remarked, "It seems to me that instead of going to India as Commander-in-Chief, I should go as the Military Member".

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With this opinion he left for India in October, 1902, and early in 1903, inviting Sir Walter Lawrence, who was again in Calcutta, to breakfast with him, handed Sir Walter a lengthy note proposing the abolition of the Military Member. He would not let Sir Walter take it to read at his leisure but explained that he wanted to know whether, in Sir Walter's opinion, Lord Curzon would accept it. Sir Walter very sensibly answered that as Lord Kitchener had not yet inspected the Frontier and had not really seen anything of the Army or the work of the Military Department, the obvious criticism of his proposal would be, that the note was based on ideas formed before Lord Kitchener had reached India; whereupon Kitchener put the note in his pocket and answered that he would wait a year before making use of it.**

Sir Walter was not in India when the final rupture

between Kitchener and Curzon occurred. He left officially soon after and on his last night he, Lady Curzon and Lord Kitchener at the Viceregal Lodge, long after midnight, sang "Auld Lang Syne" together, Curzon having disappeared to write one of those lengthy papers to which he was addicted." Kitchener's contribution to the trio could not have enhanced its effect, as he had a strange grating voice when singing and almost no ear for music.

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But although Kitchener at the time had not visited the Frontier, "before he had been in India six months he made a thorough examination such as no Commander-in-Chief had ever made before. In the fierce heat of April he started from Nushki, far to the west of the hills around Quetta, and inspected every pass and valley of importance from Baluchistan to the Khyber. In the following August he started forth again travelling from Malakand to Chitral and Gilgit and the lonely passes leading to the Pamirs".⁶⁸

During these excursions Kitchener always rode or walked alone with the officer commanding the district in which he happened to be, his staff following a quarter of a mile in the rear. On one occasion Kitchener, pointing upward to the hills rising above them, said to the officer accompanying him :

"I saw pickets stationed up there in the last district I passed through. I do not see any pickets in your country."

The officer answered, "No, sir, there are none".

"Why not?" Kitchener asked.

"Because they are not necessary, sir", the officer answered.

"Why not?" asked Kitchener again.

"Because, sir, with the escort accompanying your staff are riding the chiefs of the tribes in my district as hostages for their good behaviour."

Kitchener, always on the lookout for ability but taciturn, as usual, said nothing, but a year later this officer was given his opportunity in the form of a flattering advancement. He is now one of England's Field-M Marshals.

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In the reforms carried out by Kitchener during his term of office he had the support of Lord Curzon until the disagreement over the question of the Military Member put an end to their friendship. These reforms were many, but while most of them were accepted by Curzon "the tone of the correspondence between himself and Kitchener implied that no proposals could pass until they had received the blessing of the Military Department. There was in fact a tone of patronage which Kitchener probably found insupportable",¹¹ and in the summer of 1903 a dispute arose over a trivial matter. Kitchener had drafted an Army Order and in the usual way had sent it to the Department to be printed and issued. A junior officer thought the wording ambiguous and made a small amendment without further reference to Headquarters. Similar incidents had occurred before. Kitchener regarded the action as one of unwarrantable interference, and threatened to resign unless the Military Department was called to

order. Sir Edmund Elles, the Military Member, called on Kitchener, expressed regret and said that he thought the matter a trivial one which would not happen again and had probably never happened before. Kitchener in answer showed Sir Edmund a drawerful of similar interferences. The Military Department was called to order and Kitchener's threat of resignation withdrawn, but the main point at issue, that of dual control, was as yet unsettled.

"Curzon's term of office was due to expire at the end of 1904. Perhaps Kitchener allowed the question of dual control to rest in hopes that the next Viceroy would share his own views and that the matter could then be settled without violence. But Curzon was given an extension of two years and in April, 1904, he went home on leave, partly on account of ill-health and partly to discuss certain measures with the Cabinet. On June 15th he attended a meeting of the Imperial Defence Committee and there found a letter written by Kitchener which took him completely by surprise. It contained the views of the Commander-in-Chief on the defence of India which, of course, it was his duty to submit: Curzon's surprise was due to the fact that in pointing out the various abuses Kitchener declared that each and all of them arose from the curse of dual control, and drew the deduction that the Military Department must be abolished. Lord Ronaldshay says that this paper 'apprised Lord Curzon of the fact that Lord Kitchener intended to take advantage of his absence to bring to a head the difference between himself and the Viceroy on the question of military administration'. "70

If this was Kitchener's intention, however, it is hardly likely that he would bring the question forward whilst Curzon had the tactical advantage of being in London where the matter would be finally settled, with Kitchener himself five thousand miles away. Besides, "Kitchener had sufficient experience of procedure to know that a decision could not be made until the Viceroy had been given full opportunity to discuss it".⁷¹ It cannot, therefore, be supposed that there was any idea of scoring behind Curzon's back. "As a matter of fact, Kitchener had given Curzon an opportunity to score a point behind his back, which Curzon did not fail to take advantage of. He declared that Kitchener's paper did not deal with interior defence, but with the Constitution of the Government of India, and that therefore it ought not even to be discussed. The Prime Minister [Arthur Balfour] accepted this view, the paper was withdrawn and once more the question of dual control was shelved. . . . From this moment the issue seems to have been shifted from the realms of policy into the arena of personal combat . . . after waiting for two months, Kitchener again tendered his resignation.

"The Cabinet could no longer refuse to consider the subject, and if the Ministers had faced their responsibilities the subsequent trouble might have been avoided. The final decision would in any case have to be made by them; Kitchener's arguments were already in their hands; Curzon was on the spot as advocate for the other side; Lord Roberts could be called in to give his experience of the Military Department and suggest a solution, but the Prime Minister preferred to refer

the question to the Viceroy's Council",¹³ thereby promising that Kitchener's complaints would be considered. Kitchener thereupon again withdrew his resignation. Curzon returned to India and both sides prepared themselves for battle. Kitchener prepared a minute, the Military Member a minute, Lord Curzon a minute, the council met and voted unanimously against Kitchener's proposals.

The matter now stood precisely where it had, before the Prime Minister referred the question to the Council and the Cabinet was now forced reluctantly to come to a decision. Kitchener's prestige was so great that his resignation in case of an ultimate decision against him would undoubtedly injure the Government and a compromise was decided on. "The Military Department was to be shorn of its powers to criticize the Commander-in-Chief or to give advice, but a Member of Council would be retained" [as a sop to Curzon] "to be known as the Military Supply Member, in charge of non-combatant services."¹⁴ This compromise pleased no one, Curzon least of all, who wrote :

"The decision about the Kitchener case came the other day. I am under no illusion about the result. He has practically triumphed although a disembowelled Military Member has been left to prevent me from resigning. I am quite ready to do this."

A dispute followed between Curzon and the Cabinet as to the officer to be chosen to fill this new post, a dispute with which Kitchener had nothing to do, and Curzon resigned his office.

"But Kitchener had only got half what he demanded.

Supply and transport were still outside his command, and therefore the dual control had not been finally abolished. Brodrick's vagueness left much room for further dispute but Curzon's unconcealed annoyance was in itself enough to count as a victory for his opponent. Kitchener remained content without demanding the blood of the new Military Supply Member; that department dragged out a precarious existence for a few years and was then demolished by the Secretary of State. Its death was not lamented by anybody."⁴

It has been said that Kitchener's attitude in his controversy with Curzon was wrong and that he wished to abolish the Constitutional checks which had been evolved through long experience of constitutional methods, yet it is doubtful whether he had the least desire to be literally unconstitutional in his methods of procedure. . . . He wanted undivided control, under the Viceroy, not for any selfish reason but because he meant to carry out in his own way the task he conceived to be before him. To him the issue seemed simple and considerations which others considered as imperative were in his view mere idle subtleties."⁵ That he had no desire to turn his office into a kind of military dictatorship as some alleged is shown by the following incident. Someone suggested that he would one day be returning to India as its Viceroy.

"If I should", Kitchener answered, "then God help the Commander-in-Chief".

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Curzon had welcomed Kitchener with enthusiasm on his arrival in India, but he could not long be pleased

with an energy not directed by his own will, and the first impression soon gave way to anxiety. He wrote that "Kitchener is just like a caged lion, stalking to and fro and dashing its bruised and lacerated head against the bars"; again, "He stands aloof and alone, a molten mass of devouring energy and burning ambition, without anybody to control and guide it to the right direction". These descriptions of Kitchener, the self-contained, cannot be taken seriously, and the opinion of Lord Minto who succeeded Curzon as Viceroy is quite at variance with them. He wrote to John Morley in 1906 :

"I confess I have been very much puzzled as to the opinion of Kitchener which is so prevalent both in India and at home. It seems so often to be assumed that he is over-bearing, self-seeking, and difficult to deal with. One can only speak of people as one finds them, and all I can say is that I find him very broad-minded, very ready to see both sides of a question, and perfectly easy to deal with; whilst his minutes on the questions we have to consider since I have been here have been much the ablest and most moderate I have before me. Of course, he has strong opinions and no doubt is inclined to speak them, but so far I have found him perfectly ready to look at them from different points of view."

And later :

"The more I see of him the more confirmed I am in the opinions I have expressed to you about him. He is a most able administrator, and I always find him broad-minded, far-seeing and ready to look

at both sides of a question. I would put Kitchener far beyond the military category. I believe him to be a really big man whose abilities the country should never lose sight of. I can assure you that since I have been here he has shown every anxiety to meet any views I have expressed. . . . Personally, I never look upon him as entirely absorbed in purely military work. He is a curious personality, rather shy, and very much wrapt up in his garden. If he goes home and feels that he is not likely to follow up a career suitable to his ambition I can quite imagine his retiring into private life.””

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The estrangement which had grown up “between the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief was increased by an unfortunate incident which took place during a ball at the Viceregal Lodge at Simla. In accordance with custom there were two supper rooms, the smaller of which was reserved for the Viceroy’s own circle, Members of Council, and distinguished visitors. The guests were sitting down at this table when Lady Curzon noticed that Kitchener was not in the room and no place had been kept for him ; this no doubt was owing to the negligence of one of the staff. She was horrified and rushed out to find him. The rooms were empty but at the main entrance the wheels of a carriage were heard driving away. In Simla the roads are so narrow that only the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief are allowed to use carriages ; other people drive in rickshaws”.⁷⁸ Kitchener had departed without taking leave of his host and hostess.



LORD KITCHENER IN INDIA, 1905

"Kitchener's best friends were aghast at his precipitate behaviour on this occasion. . . . Nobody who knew Lady Curzon would for a moment suppose her capable of intentional rudeness. If he had remained for a few minutes longer her apologies would certainly have satisfied him on this score, but his abrupt departure implied that in his opinion the slight had been intentional, and constituted a public accusation against his host of grave discourtesy.

"Toward the end of the dispute no pretence was made to maintain even the coldest relations between Snowden, Kitchener's official residence, and the Viceregal Lodge. Correspondence was strictly official and unavoidable meetings were held in the presence of the full Council or on the parade ground.

"Curzon's attitude is not altogether surprising. He regarded his own position, representative of the King, as sacred, in which of course he was right. But he was also in the habit of regarding his own opinion as sacred, which had been the origin of other quarrels than that with Kitchener. Kitchener's attitude is more difficult to understand. It was not the first time he had come into collision with highly placed officials." He had disagreed with Milner over the peace terms in South Africa. "On no less than three occasions he had threatened resignation because his advice seemed likely to be rejected. Nevertheless, he had remained on the best of terms with his official opponent. The quarrel with Curzon was the first time any personal feeling had come into a dispute. The only possible explanation seems to be that his convictions, like those of Curzon, were so strong that they ran away with him, or that the

clash was one not of wills, but of two opposing yet equally masterful temperaments.””

On November 18th, 1905, the new Viceroy with Lady Minto publicly bade farewell to Lord and Lady Curzon on the *Appolo Bunder* at Bombay, the scene of so many historic welcomings and leave-takings, and with their departure was closed this unfortunate incident, involving as it did a rupture between two devoted servants of the Empire, each of whom was guided by honest, but opposing, convictions.

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Kitchener remained in India for seven years in a position of immense power and prestige. Commander-in-Chief of a great Empire, which, shut off from the rest of Asia, formed a continent rather than a country. Within its boundaries from the vast mountain ranges of the north to the lowland deltas of the south exist every geographical variety of nature, forests, lakes, jungles, smiling meadows, hot plains, swamps, deserts, valleys, plateaus and glaciers, and every variety of climate. Within its boundaries the tiger, the leopard and the lion leap and kill, wolves and wild dogs ambush their prey, the python crushes, the cobra strikes, the wild places are peopled with the elephant, the rhinoceros, the bear, the antelope, the wild ass and the wild hog, the bison and the bandarlog ; while a human population of three hundred and twenty millions, speaking two hundred different languages, exhibiting the strangest and most fantastical contrasts, live and die within its vast boundaries.

The population of British India is two hundred and

fifty millions, of the Native States seventy millions, a total greater than the combined populations of Europe and the United States of America. The Native States recognize the suzerainty of the British Crown but are ruled by native princes exercising supreme control with the power of life and death, with their own armies and their own revenues. In the great cities of the south are found all the paraphernalia of modern civilization, but in the Native States, behind the embattlemental walls and archways, the massive gates studded with iron spikes against the attack of elephants, life goes on in immemorial splendour. Stately carriages roll, the peacock tails of pageantry wave, barbaric music sounds. Precious stones of inestimable value adorn the court ladies—jewelled bangles, necklaces of uncut emeralds and pearls, priceless solitaires sparkling in their nostrils and chains of rings covered with precious stones hanging from their ears.⁶⁰ The narrow streets swarm with crowds dressed in every colour, naked beggars sit beside their wooden bowls, temple bells sound, smoke from the burning ghats rises above the walls, myriads of the faithful bathe in the waters of the sacred rivers and a dazzling light illumines the clouds of dust with which the air is filled.

At the great durbars, beside the modern troops of the British Raj, one saw the solemn irresistible march of the elephants with their swaying howdahs of burnished gold and silver, heard clanging bells, saw squadrons of horsemen, armed with damascened swords and shields, others covered with chain armour, the harness of their horses glittering with mirrors to dazzle the enemy, still others mounted on camels, elephants in coats of

mail, Arab cavalry, soldiers from the desert in huge quilted coats, monks in grinning dragon masks, fighting men on stilts for attacking war elephants ⁸¹ and, among the uncountable crowds dressed in the multi-coloured draperies of the East, top hats, and the latest Parisian fashions.

India must have attracted Kitchener partly because it was the East, but he found it was not the East that he had known before. The East which he had loved was that inhabited by primitive peoples leading a patriarchal and nomadic life ; the East of India presented a glittering spectacle of barbaric power, of ancient and complicated civilisations, fixed and traditional, marching with the rigid formalities of British administration. In the East which he had known he had lived close to the native life ; in India, hemmed in by the pomp and circumstance of his exalted office, this was impossible. Kitchener, servant of Empire, fought for the reforms which he considered necessary, and carried out the social programmes required of official life, and carried them out with his usual efficiency, but his heart was elsewhere and in 1906 Lord Minto writing to Morley said :

“ He told me very privately that he would really like to succeed Lord Cromer in Egypt ; that he felt that he could fill the position and that he imagined Cromer would not stay on much longer and that he might wait and see.”⁸²

Very much the words that Kitchener had used to Sir Valentine Chirol when they had dined together in Cairo ten years before.

When official duties permitted the "caged lion, stalking to and fro and dashing its bruised and lacerated head against the bars . . . the molten mass of devouring energy and burning ambition", was taking prizes at the Calcutta flower show for his orchids and transforming the residency there from an old-fashioned uncomfortable house into a charming habitation. At Simla he was adding a ballroom to his official residence. He wrote to Lady Salisbury:

"I feel all the better for my tour in the hills and last night I gave my first ball. I always have to give two each year as Simla is socially so large that they could not all get in if I only gave one. I enclose a photograph of my newly decorated drawing-room. It was taken before I got the silk for the panels and a different set of electric light sconces, which are much better, but it will give you an idea. It is all white and gold with a light grey-blue in the panels. The plaster ceiling and everything was made by Indian workmen. No European but myself had anything to do with it. I think you would like it."⁸³

In doing this room Kitchener had found a new use for the voluminous past reports which choked the files of his department. He had them made into pulp, pressed the pulp into ornamental moulds and with the papier mâché panels so produced decorated the ceiling.

Except at Simla he was under the necessity of maintaining the position and dignity of a Commander-in-Chief, but at Snowden and Wildflower Hall, his country house not far away, he seemed to be on holiday and people who met him there saw a side of him which

often to come up to tea and we had long discussions about his future. He is most anxious to succeed Minto as Viceroy. He has great knowledge of India and recognizes the importance of continuity of government during the initiation of reforms. The Frontier tribes are afraid of him and the Amir likes him, but I wonder if he realizes how ceaseless is the work of the Viceroy. We also discussed the necessity, should he be appointed, of his having a wife. He says he would hate a managing woman ; I think he would dislike a cypher more. No doubt the age would be difficult but we decided that thirty-five would suit him. He said, " You talk as if the whole thing were settled, and the plans you are making for me are most exciting but I am not counting on it as I have learned not to put faith in politicians."

In July a public dinner was given him at the United Services Club, when he and the Viceroy made speeches bidding each other farewell. They had worked together in complete harmony and a bond of respect and affection had been established between them. If his staff loved him he loved them too. He was very grumpy on leaving and would hardly speak, finally saying to one of his A.D.C.'s. " I hate so to say good-bye to all you good fellows".

* * * *

During the seven years Kitchener spent in India he improved the army out of all recognition. The three armies previously in existence, Bengal, Madras and Bombay, he made into one. He made mobilization possible and rapid, " the native regiments were re-

numbered and their peace establishments brought into uniformity, the whole of the artillery was rearmed with quick-firing guns and all British troops received the new rifle. The supply and transport corps was removed from its comparative isolation and made an integral part of the organization for warfare, a staff college was started at Quetta, the factories for providing the Indian Army with munitions of war were brought to completion and a host of minor reforms were instituted. It may not be that Kitchener was ever beloved by the Army, perhaps he did not want to be, but he had the faculty of producing extraordinary devotion among the officers with whom he was closely in contact and he was respected and feared by all. He made the army into a first-class fighting force and officers who frankly avowed unfavourable prejudices never failed to acknowledge that he had greatly increased its efficiency".⁸⁴ In all this there seemed to be the guiding motive of some settled plan which had to do with a belief and an apprehension. Ballard in his "Life" says of him at this time, "His letters to the Secretary of State express anxiety about our readiness for war, greater than could be attributed to his preoccupation with the question of local defence. . . . There must therefore have been some larger danger in his mind and he found it harder to bear because it was impossible to share his suspicions with anybody. However grave the situation, a man in high office may not make any public statement which conflicts with the policy of the government, he must confine himself to confidential warnings. But the great danger which was to arise ten years later lay outside the province of Indian affairs. The whole attitude of Liberal

Ministers showed that warnings about a European war would be met with incredulity. Their projected economies depended on the belief that the peace of Europe was secure. Some Ministers held the doctrine that it was dangerous to encourage military enthusiasm even in the army. It may have been in consequence of this attitude that Kitchener never uttered any definite warning of the danger ahead. We cannot say, therefore, how far he foresaw the war with Germany. I have not been able to trace any statement on the subject except in vague terms, but the readiness with which he faced the problems which the Great War created is some evidence that he had given thought to matters which lay far outside the North-West Frontier and the possibilities of unrest in India ”.

But there is more conclusive evidence than that, for in Japan, on leaving India for his world tour after laying down his command there, Kitchener met General Rawlinson, his old friend and comrade in arms. Rawlinson recorded in his diary at the time, a conversation during which Kitchener told him that semi-official conversations were going on between our General Staff and the French General Staff, with a view to a combined plan of campaign if Germany attacked France. Kitchener said, “ He did not like this as we had no plan of our own and it would mean inevitably that we should be tacked on to a French plan which might not suit us ”.”

The penetrating insight of this prophecy, so completely and disastrously verified in later years, illuminates with the brilliance of a searchlight the blindness of those who were at that time guiding the destinies of the British Empire.

IX

ENGLAND ONCE MORE. THE DEATH OF EDWARD VII.
BROOME IS PURCHASED. CENTRAL AFRICA. THE
CORONATION OF GEORGE V.

AFTER leaving India Kitchener travelled into Manchuria to see the battle-fields of the Russo-Japanese war, and visited Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. During this journey which lasted seven months, the politicians were wondering what to do on his return, with this romantic but powerful figure which towered so far above any contemporary in the estimation of the British public. He would accept the Viceroyalty of India, but Morley, who was now Secretary of State for India, would not have him there. He knew that Kitchener's autocratic nature would never harmonize with his own and that Kitchener would never accept the subservient position to which Morley was reducing the Viceroyalty.

Minto found that "as time went on Lord Morley became more autocratic and exacting. A constant stream of telegrams and despatches demanding minute information on every detail, followed day by day", till at last he exclaimed :

"I used to imagine that the Secretary of State only aimed at directing great principles of Indian policy and that the administration of the country

rested with the Government of India, but there is interference in everything and its only result is intense worry for the Viceroy, as do what he will the Secretary of State cannot administer India.”⁸⁰

Lawrence, Lord Curzon's private secretary, he who had sung “Auld Lang Syne” with Lady Curzon and Kitchener on leaving India, had, on his return to England, been asked by Morley to join his council. Sir Alfred Lyall, who had for many years been a member of the India Council, told Lawrence that work in the Council under Morley had the same savour to him as chewed hay. However, Lawrence joined. After a brief time he resigned, but even during his short experience as a member he noticed a tendency to greater interference and a desire to initiate policies for India :

“It was about this time that the Secretary of State for India allowed Montague to declare that the Viceroy of India was the agent of the India Office. Literally this ruling may have been correct, but while I was in India no one, either British or Indian regarded the Viceroy as other than the Governor-General in Council and also the representative of the King-Emperor, and I rather think that from the point of view of India the Secretary of State was regarded as the Agent of the Governor-General of India, who once a year to an exiguous audience, told the House of Commons that all was well. . . . The Services of India, the Princes of the Indian States, and the peoples of British India had regarded the Viceroy as the sacrosanct and final arbiter of their destinies and it

was an evil day for discipline and order in India when the Indians began to realize that the great Lord Sahib was vulnerable, with feet of clay, and that an interview with the Secretary of State might prove more fruitful."⁸⁷

Smith-Dorrien calling on John Morley at this time :

"I found that he had no knowledge of the people or country of India. He was most open about it, though, and made me take a map and give him a little lecture on the subject, and as his time was limited he insisted on my going again. This I did a day or two before I sailed for India, and his final remark raised doubts in my mind as to whether I had proved an efficient instructor in geography, for he gave me a message to deliver to someone in Calcutta as I passed through that city on my way to Quetta. I had often heard of ministers being selected to guide departments of which they could have had no previous knowledge, but this was my first personal experience and I went out from his presence marvelling more than ever how our ship of State ever kept afloat. Only those people who approve of Morley's Indian reforms which paved the way for the disastrous Montague policy will regard him as a success in the India Office."⁸⁸

The fact is that neither the Government nor the soldiers at Whitehall desired to have Kitchener any nearer than they could help. He had the reputation of being an organizer of ruthless efficiency and of unbending sternness. All who had established interests in the

existing system feared a radical and remorseless uprooting of historic sinecures, a reshuffling of the cards of office and power.”

But on Kitchener's return the matter must be definitely settled. Cromer had left Egypt three years before and at his recommendation the post which Kitchener coveted there, had been given to Gorst. Wingate was still ably administrating the Sudan. The question of the Indian Viceroyalty again presented itself. King Edward was strongly in favour of Kitchener, and Morley asked Kitchener to dine with him. Lord Esher and Lord Inchcape were present, making a party of four. The dinner was not a success. It was said afterwards that Kitchener, the silent one, talked too much! Morley wrote of this meeting to Minto in India :

“ I had expected a silent, stiff, moody hero : behold he was most cheerful and cordial.”

Minto's letters written from India describing Kitchener as anything but stiff and moody had evidently made no impression on Morley. In fact Morley was antagonistic to Kitchener, and in his criticisms of him during Kitchener's Egyptian career had come off second best.

Before this, whilst Kitchener was still in India, the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean had been offered *him*, a handful of battalions scattered among islands and fortresses. He wrote to a friend :

“ Mr. Haldane offered me the Mediterranean Command, but I refused it. Lord Morley tried

pressure and this I resisted. Then they brought in the King. He wired me, very strongly urging my acceptance. I said I had already refused for reasons given but as His Majesty's wishes were commands to me I placed myself in his hands. After some time for consideration he wrote that I should accept for a short time under new conditions, so I had nothing else to do and had to wire Mr. Haldane that I would accept. If the Government play the King, we poor soldiers are done and can only obey, at least such are my principles. I think it is rather hard on me as I wanted a time to myself and had no wish to replace the Duke of Connaught in a billet in which he found a fifth wheel in the coach, but I do not see that I could have done anything else. I hope the Duke will understand that it has been no wish of mine and contrary to every inclination and interest I have to follow him in the Mediterranean."¹

When the Committee of Imperial Defence was brought into existence the office of Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean was created for the Duke of Connaught. The Duke had found the post an unsatisfactory one and had resigned. He had felt it unworthy of him. So did Kitchener. However, before leaving India he accepted it, and set off on his world tour.

On April 27th, 1910, Kitchener having crossed from New York on the *Oceanic*, reached Waterloo at three o'clock in the afternoon. Three hours later the King descended from the Royal carriage at Victoria on its arrival from Dover. He had been on holiday at

Biarritz. The papers at that time reported that he seemed to be in excellent health. This was a Wednesday. At half-past eleven on the following day he received Mr. Asquith who, with Sir John Jellicoe, was leaving that night for Portsmouth to join the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress*, which was taking them to inspect the new dockyard and the naval establishment at Gibraltar.

Immediately after his departure, Kitchener was given an audience by the King who presented him with the baton of Field-Marshal. Precisely what passed between them is not known but the question of the Viceroyalty of India must have been discussed and the King absolved Kitchener from his promise to assume the Mediterranean command. Some restiveness had previously been displayed in Parliament over Kitchener's appointment to this insignificant post.

That afternoon when the King visited the Royal Academy it was noticed that he looked pale and tired, but the same evening he attended a performance of "Siegfried" at Covent Garden. On Saturday, the 30th, he left for Sandringham, returning to London on Monday. On Tuesday, although it was reported that he was not well, the Court Circular on the following morning indicated that he was giving audiences as usual and attending to necessary business, but on the 5th he was unable to meet the Queen on her return from Corfu, where she had been visiting her brother the King of Greece, and on the same day the doctors announced that he was suffering from a severe attack of bronchitis. That night newsvendors were calling out, "Serious illness of the King" to the crowds leaving the theatres.

It was known the next day that the King was not expected to live and that afternoon Kitchener, Balfour and others, watched for a long time from a window at No. 10 Downing Street, expecting each moment to see the flag at Buckingham Palace drop to half mast. They watched until it was too dark to see. The flag was still at its accustomed place but in the morning it proclaimed that His Majesty had passed away, and with his passing, passed Kitchener's chance for the Viceroyalty.

Whilst Kitchener was still in South Africa, London had witnessed the solemn pomp of the funeral rites of the great Queen. With her death ended the Victorian Age, the age of the Tractarian Movement, of the Civil War in the United States, the age of Dickens and Tennyson, of Turner and Frith, of great material wealth, smug complacency and an aristocracy which still ruled. An epoch, narrow, bigoted and yet great. Then Edward succeeded. Eight years before, Kitchener, fresh from South Africa, had taken part in the ceremonies attending his coronation. During this period vast changes, as yet hardly foreseen, had begun to take shape in the social and political life of humanity, and now another royal funeral would pass slowly through the streets of London ; all the funeral pageantry of the obsequies of the monarch of the greatest Empire of history would be enacted once more, cannon would boom, the pipes wail, bells toll, dirges sound. To the slow and solemn tread of marching troops the coffin, resting on its gun carriage, under the Royal Standard, would pass bearing its burden to its last resting place and, with the interment of Edward VII, would recede

into the past, that period of transition which connected the Victorian era with the modern world.

In this spectacle Kitchener took part and his hold on the imagination of the public was so great that notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion, when he appeared riding alone, cheers broke out which he silenced at once with a stern gesture of protest. Such was his personal power.

The Edwardian period proved in its fruits to be a disastrous one for the British Empire. It saw that change in England's foreign policy which was to force it into the Great War and drag it close to ruin, for in 1905 plans for military and naval co-operation between England and France had been begun by Lord Lansdowne. During this period, too, the character of its public men had begun to deteriorate. Connecting links with the past still remained, the languid, egotistical Balfour, Asquith, who more than any other had inherited the old traditions, but the new figures appearing on the stage from the Edwardian period to the beginning of the Great War were types inferior in character if not in ability, to those which had preceded them. Lloyd George the opportunist, Churchill brilliant and unstable, Bonar Law the crafty modern politician, the timid Grey, and Birkenhead the bruiser, were beginning to occupy the places in the public eye once filled by Gladstone, Palmerston, Salisbury and Beaconsfield. The word "statesman" was disappearing from the English vocabulary. It was too large in its meaning to describe fittingly the new generation of public men and the term "politician" was taking its place.

Kitchener was now sixty. From the day when he

had set sail for Palestine, thirty-six years before, he had had no real rest. His life had been one of danger, toil, and burdens and responsibilities without end. Now that the Viceroyalty had been given to another he determined to take a vacation in a climate more agreeable to him than that of England in winter, but, before leaving, he asked friends to make enquiries as to such country houses not too far from London which were for sale which might meet his requirements, so that he could inspect them on his return. During the many years which he had devoted to service of the Empire he had lived, during his early adventurous days in Egypt, in mud huts, in tents, even in caves; later in two rooms in the ruined palace at Khartum and in South Africa in Boer farm houses lacking the most primitive conveniences; later still in official residences usually uncomfortable and unattractive until he had taken them in hand but which must always be vacated on the expiration of his tenure of office. Now, uncertain of the future he had decided to acquire a house of his own.

This done, with two companions, FitzGerald and McMurdo, he left for Egypt in November, stopping at Constantinople on the way. His friendship with FitzGerald, which lasted for the rest of his life had begun with FitzGerald's appointment as his A.D.C. in India. McMurdo had been his first A.D.C. in Egypt. At Port Said he met the Mintos once more. Minto had been succeeded by Hardinge and was on his way to England. Lady Minto writes :

"At Port Said a memorable reunion occurred. Admiral Sir Edward Poe then commanding the

Mediterranean Fleet, had made a special enquiry as to when we should reach Port Said and on our arrival in the very early hours of the morning we received a message inviting us to breakfast on board his flag-ship to meet Lord Kitchener. At 8 a.m. he appeared in his barge to fetch us. In his journal Minto wrote, 'The Admiral had come specially to meet us and old K. had made desperate efforts to be there too. He only got here at 11.30 last night, having defied the quarantine officials on arriving from Turkey where he had been prowling around. It was a great meeting. The late Commander-in-Chief in India, the late Commander-in-Chief of the East Indian Station and the late Viceroy. We were very glad to see each other again'."

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On Kitchener's arrival in Egypt everyone both high and low seemed to resume at once quite naturally, in the presence of this unofficial personage in civilian clothes," the subordinate positions they had occupied when he was last there. At Cairo he telegraphed Major Leggett asking him to join him on the Sudan-Uganda frontier. Leggett, the officer who had commandeered an engine to carry to Kitchener the Boer delegates' belief that if Kitchener would promise to stay on in South Africa the burghers would agree to the peace terms, had remained in South Africa after the war and at this time was living at Mombasa, a member of the Legislative Council of the British East Africa Pro-

tectorate. Delighted at the opportunity to see his old chief once more, he met Kitchener at the appointed place and by steamer and overland marches the party reached the shores of Lake Victoria where they embarked to cross to the terminus of the Uganda-Mombasa railway. During this crossing FitzGerald was seasick (at Broome many years afterwards Kitchener mentioned the incident to Leggett), and Kitchener himself narrowly missed falling overboard. Leaving the lake on the railway for Mombasa a board was placed across the front of the engine above the forward wheels and all four sat on it as they travelled through Kenya. Kitchener, pleased with the country, suggested that they should make an application for a grant of land. Leggett knew just the district that would suit them, and on reaching Nairobi the necessary papers were made out. At Mombasa they stopped with Leggett at his house. Twenty-five years before, Kitchener had known Mombasa well during his services on the commission dealing with the coastal claims of the Sultan of Zanzibar. At that time he had made the acquaintance of many of the Arabs living there. He had not forgotten them, and now on his return he hunted them up, climbing the steep stairs of the tall Arab houses in search of them, and spending hours with them talking of the past. Some of them asked if he would not address the Arabs of Mombasa in a body. He consented and a large room or hall was secured by them. In absolute silence they listened as he talked to them in their own tongue. He spoke of the history of their brave and ancient nation, of the role they had played in the past, of the holy men and great sheikhs who had given lustre

to their race. He said that they were and had been, a great people but that they were gradually relinquishing their supremacy into the hands of others, that their lands were growing less, their wealth decreasing and that the reason for this was that whilst others were taking advantage of their opportunities for the acquisition of modern education, they were not doing so. He asked them as their friend and well-wisher of many years' standing, to encourage their young men to become educated according to modern ideas, and so equip themselves to hold their own with others in the competition of modern life.

For an hour he spoke to them and immediately throughout the Sudan and Egypt, throughout Arabia and the Red Sea littoral it was known that the great Kitchener had been giving them wise council at Mombasa. In making this speech, Kitchener's purpose no doubt was to call attention to the work being done and the opportunities offered them by the Gordon College at Khartum and the smaller schools which were spreading throughout the Sudan and even beyond its borders.

While at Leggett's house enjoying the unaccustomed leisure of his vacation, he received a letter from Lord Haldane conveying the wish of His Majesty King George that Lord Kitchener should if possible return in time to take command of the troops at the Coronation. As the date for the ceremony was fixed for the end of June, there was not too much time for the complicated arrangements which would be necessary. He cabled his intention to return and sailed from Mombasa on the



BROOMFIELD

Began in 1835 and attributed to Imigo Jones

steamship *Prinzessen* almost at once, reaching England on April 2nd.

* * * * *

Ten days later he was taken to see an early seventeenth-century house with a park of five hundred acres, half-way between Canterbury and Folkestone. This was Broome. Attributed to Inigo Jones, it had for many generations belonged to the ancient family of Oxenden and had been built in 1638. A hundred and fifty years later, James Wyatt had added a delightful drawing room between the southern wings of the house in the style of the brothers Adam. The house contained about forty rooms, there was the usual stabling, and a number of outbuildings and cottages. Standing against a background of ancient beech and sycamore trees, the mansion of dark reddish brick, of good size but not enormous, rather noble but not ostentatious, dignified, and with that brooding look old houses often have, appealed to Kitchener at once, but his practical good sense and his really fine taste resulted in his immediately visualising many changes. A lodge at the entrance gates must be built, the ceilings of some of the main rooms must be raised, in this way increasing their dignity and at the same time giving the bedrooms above more comfortable proportions. He would change the present low ceilinged hall into a great one by making it two stories high and he would build terraces and gardens. He immediately decided to buy it. Perhaps, too, its proximity to the house of a cousin who lived not far away and of whom he was very fond may have had something to do with his decision, for he said to her

at the time, "When my work is finished I will come here, and living within easy reach of one another we will grow old together". He engaged an architect, made plans for extensive alterations and, renting a flat in Whitehall Court, settled himself for six months in London. On April 18th he wrote to Leggett at Mombasa :

"I take up Coronation work at the Horse Guards on 1st of May. . . . I am looking forward to paying you a visit next winter, the weather here is cold and beastly and I have had a bad cold ever since I came to this country. Fitz has gone to his people and Mac has not yet arrived. The above address will find me until next October.""

On April 23rd McMurdo wrote Leggett :

"K. said to me the other day, in his new flat (89, Whitehall Court), 'Well Mac, we shall be out there again in November'. He apparently (damn this pen) sees no public appointment in front of him unless Gorst chucks it, which he might do as he is pretty bad, I mean ill, poor fellow.""

In May Kitchener wrote to Leggett :

"My dear Leggett,

Thanks for yours of the 8th, I should much like to see a plan of the 5,000 acres allotted to me, particularly as regards the rivers and the lie of the ground, and if possible I should like to have marked on it



LORD KITCHENER, 1911

At the Coronation procession of King George V when he was in command
of the troops

what crops are suitable for different parts of the land, and some account of the whole place.

I have seen the photos you sent Fitz but it is rather difficult to realise what the place is like. I am in no hurry to begin expenditure as Broome and no pay makes my supply of spare cash very small indeed.

I find that I have hardly time to get through my work as I am on several committees.

Please thank Ali Ben Salim for the chairs and chests he is sending me. I shall write again when I receive and have seen them.”⁹⁵

The King was crowned in June. Kitchener's Coronation Orders filled a volume of over two hundred pages. His arrangements, and those of the police, must have been efficient, since no casualty was reported amongst the vast crowds assembled to watch the procession.

In July Gorst, who had been hopelessly ill for some months, died in England and Kitchener was appointed British Agent and Consul-General in Egypt to succeed him.

Early in September Leggett arrived in England bringing with him plans, photographs and reports of the grants in Kenya. In Kitchener's flat in Whitehall the four owners, Kitchener, FitzGerald, McMurdo and Leggett discussed the development of their property. A house was to be built, cattle bought, and preparations made for the cultivation of rubber. These matters being settled and arrangements being completed for the alteration of Broome, Kitchener sailed on September

16th, 1911, for Alexandria to take up his new duties in Egypt.

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In London Pellisier's "Follies" were playing at the Apollo. "The Importance of Being Earnest" was being done at the St. James's, "The Marriage of Kitty" at the Duke of York's and the Russian Ballet at Covent Garden. Two months before, Lloyd George had shocked conservative England by introducing his National Insurance Bill in the House of Commons. In the United States the Supreme Court had ordered the dissolution of the Standard Oil Company as an organisation in restraint of trade, an order which dismayed the Standard Oil Company not at all. The Agadir crisis had arisen and the Powers, forgetting their solemn undertakings to respect the independence of Morocco, had agreed to give France a free hand there, on France giving England a free hand in Egypt and Germany a slice of the French Congo, Lloyd George piously remarking, "National honour is no party question". Boutros Pasha, the Egyptian premier, had just been murdered. In four months France had had three premiers. A revolution was taking place in Mexico, there were food riots in the Pas de Calais, and the race for armaments was in full swing. A few months later Lord Rosebery, referring to England's Commitments to France, said in a speech at Glasgow, "This we do know about our foreign policy, that, for good or evil, we are now embraced in the midst of the Continental system. That I regard as the gravest fact in the later portion of my life". *The Times* asked

editorially, "Who then, makes war? The answer is to be found in the Chancelleries of Europe, among men who have too long played with human lives as pawns in a game of chess, who have become so enmeshed in formulas and the jargon of diplomacy that they have ceased to be conscious of the poignant realities with which they trifle".

The Tragi-Comedy of human existence was being enacted as usual, the Chancelleries and Governments of Europe in their arrogance, stupidity and pride were heading for the Great Catastrophe and the three years of peace Kitchener was to spend in Egypt were the last he was to know.

X

THE RETURN TO EGYPT AS BRITISH AGENT AND CONSUL-GENERAL. THE LAST YEARS OF PEACE.

IN April, 1907, a few days before the appearance of his report, in which the Nationalist and Pan-Islamic movements were declared to be detrimental to the country's welfare, Cromer had resigned his post on account of ill-health.

"Cromer drove to the station at Cairo, through silent if not sullen streets, and departed to England unaccompanied by any expression of regret from those he had served so long. His own temperament, philosophic, almost cold in its power of abstraction, would not have led him to count upon any warmth of demonstration . . . but even to him it must have seemed, as he cast his mind back over the years since 1882, that the immediate reward was not commensurate with the achievement. What he had done for Egypt had been of inestimable value for every class of population."¹⁶

On Cromer's recommendation, Kitchener was still in India, Gorst was chosen to carry out the policy of the New Liberal Government, a policy originally suggested by Cromer, of giving Egyptian authorities a wider freedom of administration. But the instalment offered by Gorst was considered negligible and the Nationalist Movement, which had existed since the days of Arabi Pasha, made rapid headway, secretly backed by the Khedive. The new policy, instead of winning the



LORD KITCHENER ENTERING THE KHE DIVE'S STATE COACH

At Alexandria on his arrival as British Agent in Egypt,
27th September, 1911

regard of the people, had a contrary effect ; they looked on it as a slackening of control signifying weakness, and a lack of confidence became general in Europeans and loyal Egyptians alike. Instead of pacifying the Nationalist politicians, it encouraged them to take liberties they would never have dared in former days. Slandorous attacks were made on the British Administration, which was defeated when recourse was had to the courts. The Sudan Government instituted unsuccessful proceedings for slander and sedition, carrying the action through three courts. The Nationalists were jubilant at its defeat, a financial crisis still further upset the community, and a fierce religious controversy raged between the Moslems and the Copts, violence and outrages increased and the country seemed to be drifting into chaos.⁹⁷ It was clear that the policy which Gorst had inaugurated had completely failed of its object.

Early in 1910 the Suez Canal Company made a proposal to the Government to extend its franchise. The existing concession was due to terminate in 1968. The Company proposed an extension of forty years, for which they proposed to pay a capital sum of four million pounds and an annual share of the profits. The offer was on the face of it a most profitable one for Egypt. The Financial Adviser recommended its acceptance and Boutros Pasha, the premier, and his ministry agreed. The Nationalists greeted the decision with charges of treason and betrayal, and so popular did the cry become that repudiation of the agreement was demanded, and in the afternoon of February 10th, 1910, as he was standing on the pavement about to get into his carriage, Boutros was assassinated by a Nationalist fanatic.

But the assassin's shot killed not only Boutros. It killed Gorst.

Ten months after Boutros' assassination, Kitchener had arrived on his way to Mombasa, and like lightning a rumour passed through the whole of Egypt that he was coming to take control. At the news the great mass of the Egyptian population breathed with relief, but as he passed through and continued on his way south, disappearing at last into the wilds of central Africa this hope was abandoned and it was not until the autumn of 1911 that he returned as British Agent and Consul-General. This time he came in a warship. When he assumed office, he found a fierce religious controversy still raging and political unrest and seditious journalism active. Scarcely had he taken stock of his surroundings when the Italo-Turkish war broke out, creating a situation which at any moment might have become serious owing to the large Italian colony and the community of religions between Egypt and Turkey. Throughout his term Turkey, the suzerain of Egypt, was at war with Christian nations. Kitchener's presence and prestige was solely responsible for the safe passage of Egypt through the critical period of the Tripoli war and the two Balkan wars. But for him the Egyptian Government would not have been able to prevent collisions between the Greeks and the Italians and the natives, and it certainly would not have succeeded in forcing the Egyptian Moslems to maintain neutrality.

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"Gorst's main preoccupation had been to demonstrate British sympathy with Egyptian political aspira-

tions. Kitchener naturally regarded political institutions as not in themselves admirable and in Eastern countries more than likely to be harmful. Tactical considerations might render it necessary to develop them, but they could not in his view ever be taken as the goal of a disinterested policy. His real opinion of them was that at any rate in their Western form they were sure to have a disastrous effect on Oriental races, and he did not hesitate to express this view officially. 'Party spirit', he wrote, 'is, in them [Oriental nations], like strong drink to uncivilised African natives', and in his first annual review he described the serious deterioration which he discovered since his previous departure: it was a crime, he thought, to have introduced into a Moslem people, with its ideals of fraternal equality, the seeds of friction and party."¹

On the other hand he had a strong affection and regard for the fellahin who had formed the bulk of his command as Sirdar. He was bound to them alike by personal friendship and by the spirit of corporate loyalty. As between the politician and the peasant his choice was already made. "The future development of the vast mass of the inhabitants of Egypt depends upon improved conditions of agriculture, which, with educational progress, are the more essential steps towards material and moral advancement of the people." Holding these views it was certain that his policy would give prominence to administrative measures and relegate political reform to the second place."

Lord Lloyd says of Kitchener's administration: "Kitchener's tenure of office, like that of Gorst, was of very brief duration. It is difficult, therefore, to assess

fairly his value as an administrator. The salient facts of his three years at the head of the Egyptian administration are clear enough. For the main direction and policy the people of Egypt owe and have given him their lasting gratitude. His policy was to promote the material welfare of the fellahin. He had his own schemes for that purpose, and what interested him was that those schemes should be put into operation as little modified and with as little delay as possible. Those schemes, however open to criticism in detail, were conceived on far-seeing lines and based on a clear insight into the needs of the situation. Other matters interested him not at all or only incidentally. Questions relating to political progress he regarded either as routine duties or as fields for entertaining experiment—to be dealt with and got out of the way as quickly as possible, so that the field might be free for more interesting work. Whatever may have been the defects in his programme, the fact remains that, although a spirit of turbulent unrest had been aroused by Gorst's experiment, and though grave difficulties had been engendered out of the Mediterranean situation and the uncertainties and alarms into which the Ottoman Empire was plunged, Egypt again achieved a measure of tranquillity and her prosperous progress was upset by few political storms.

“When Kitchener arrived in Egypt, the tide of economic prosperity had turned and was on flow again. But even if, contrary to normal experience, it is this fact which was the real cause of the return of tranquillity and even if Kitchener's task was rendered easier by the recovery, still, the whole story had not yet been

told. The tranquillity which ensued may have had its origin in natural prosperity ; but to Kitchener's insight belongs the credit of having recognized the opportunity. He has been criticised for extravagant expenditure, but that expenditure was mostly of a productive character, all tending to promote the cheerful confidence and sense of well-being of the people. Egypt was feeling well ; measures were being taken to make her feel better still ; sickness was rife in her neighbourhood, but her guardian was wise and firm in directing her relations with the outside world. She had a great deal to lose and very little to gain by agitation, and things were good as they were. But to say merely that he had good luck and made good use of it would be to do much less than justice to Kitchener's great qualities."¹⁰⁰

This is generous praise and true, but the author of these paragraphs expresses two opinions which may be questioned. He says, " But in general it was true of Kitchener that, once his own mind was made up he was unable to tolerate criticism of his plans, however disinterested or sincere ", and later, " This narrowing of his field of vision rendered Kitchener, great as he was, the inferior of Cromer, and it was undeniably a symptom of an intellect which was not in all respects first class ". This belief in Kitchener's intolerance of criticism continues to persist in spite of the fact that all available testimony including that of Sir Ronald Storrs, whom Lord Lloyd quotes, goes to prove the contrary. He was exacting and did not like people who raised petty difficulties, but even Lord Esher, in his " Tragedy of Lord Kitchener ", a work adequately

dealt with by Lord Birkenhead in his "Points of View", mentions his invariable courtesy and patience. As to his being Cromer's inferior, Lord Lloyd is comparing a man of great ability with one who had more than a touch of genius. In imagination Kitchener was undoubtedly the superior, and Sir Malcolm MacIlwraith, who served as legal adviser to the Egyptian Government through the administration of Cromer, Gorst and Kitchener, states in his study of the three pro-Consuls that Kitchener's conception of his role was more grandiose and universal than that of either of his predecessors.¹⁰¹

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But in spite of the problems and difficulties with which he had to cope, the political and religious turmoil, the intrigues of the Khedive and the murderous plottings against himself, the three years which Kitchener spent in Egypt from 1911 to 1914 were the happiest of his life. Loaded with honours, a Field-Marshal, the bearer of a high title, the hero of two great campaigns, his reputation enhanced by his record as Commander-in-Chief in India, with the most distinguished military reputation in the world, and an unequalled popular prestige not only in the British Empire but throughout the Eastern Hemisphere, come at last to fill the post he had coveted for so many years, it would seem that he had reached the consummation and apogee of his career.

In themselves the honours which had been bestowed on him meant nothing to him, for it is a fact that

Kitchener was without personal ambition. If his prestige helped him in the work he had to do, then it was of value, otherwise not. After his controversy with Curzon, he had said to Lady Salisbury, "I wanted no credit. I knew that the reforms I advocated must be carried out but I would have been quite content if Curzon had proposed them instead of myself". To him, as he had often said, the work was everything, the workman nothing.

All the heavy burdens which had weighed him down during the past had fallen from his shoulders. He was now sixty-one. He was secure from financial worries and when his term of office in Egypt should come to an end he could look forward to an honoured and peaceful old age at Broome or among the flocks and herds of the farms and plantations in Kenya.

In the meantime he was back once more in that part of the world which he really loved above all others. He loved the colour and variety of the Near East, the unchanging pageantry of Oriental life, the bazaars, the fellahin drawing sustenance from the earth with the primitive methods of biblical times, the Arabs with their long lines of camels pacing silently across the desert, the monuments of a strange and ancient civilisation standing against the cloudless curtain of the sky, the mystic Nile, the cataracts, the hostile desert, and beyond, the Sudan.

Perhaps he loved the desert best of all. It had seen the struggles and absorbed the energies of his earlier days. From Korosko to Khartum he knew it, every khor and valley, every tribe and well. All the dangerous and romantic moments of his early career had been

passed there, his lonely vigils with Rundle, his solitary and hazardous life at Korti keeping in touch with Gordon, his efforts to save Stewart, the long preparations to avenge Gordon's death and destroy the authority of the Dervishes and the desperate enterprise which ended in the overthrow of the Khalifa and the liberation of the Sudan.

And this liberated Sudan, this immense country extending from Egypt to the Congo, was his child. He had brought it into being from its former chaos, and now once more he was living close to it. With Wingate ruling wisely and ably at Khartum, and with himself at Cairo, what humanitarian benefits might they not accomplish for the backward peoples under their sway? And it was with such thoughts that Kitchener had set to work on policies and reforms which dismayed some of the officials who had been used to the leisurely pace of the Gorst regime.

Like many soldiers he hated warfare. War meant destruction, and destruction to Kitchener's orderly and constructive mind was abhorrent, but now he could devote himself to the arts of peace, and, whilst engaged in the correction of the many social abuses prevalent in Egypt, he would amuse himself with the reconstruction of Broome. The appearance, too, of the Agency at Cairo sadly offended his artistic tastes, and he transformed it as he had his official residences in India.

But he grumbles a little at the expense he is being put to. In February, 1912, in writing to Leggett from the Agency with reference to the Kenya property he says :

“With regard to the programme, I find this place very expensive, and Broome takes a good deal, so if you can go a little slow for the first year I shall be able to do more in 1913. This would suit my finances better as I have had to buy all the upstairs furniture of this house.”

In the refurnished Agency he entertained as lavishly, with the same attention to detail, as he had in India, and in the streets of Cairo his carriage was preceded by running syces in liveries of scarlet and gold. Knowing the necessity of impressing the native mind with the power of England, he revived the pomp of Cromer's regime which Gorst had abandoned. Many friends from England came to stop with him. Distinguished guests were constantly arriving or departing or meeting at his hospitable table, and Mudirs, Pashas and Egyptians from all walks of life came to see him.

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It was to the Khedive, when he had publicly insulted Kitchener and the Egyptian Army at a review at Wadi Halfa eighteen years before, that Kitchener had said admonishingly, “Naughty boy, naughty boy”. But he had not stopped there. He had offered his resignation unless Abbas made a public apology and Cromer had forced Abbas to make it. Abbas had never forgiven Kitchener for this, and he disliked the English. He was a born intriguer and had in a measure the spendthrift tastes of his grandfather Ismail the Extravagant. Kitchener understood quite well that he would have to combat Abbas's antagonism, subterranean if not

outspoken, and at the beginning endeavoured to work with him in amity.

The Princess Nazli Fazil, an aunt of the Khedive, had known and liked Kitchener from his earliest days in Egypt. On the other hand she disliked her nephew intensely, and it was she who had warned Wingate of the approaching mutiny instigated by Abbas, which had taken place at Khartum soon after Kitchener had left for South Africa more than ten years before.

Kitchener often called on her and they would talk with a combined vocabulary of English, French, Turkish and Arabic. Princess Nazli Fazil never hesitated in her comments on the devious manœuvres of Egyptian intrigue and this, with many other private sources of information and the course of public events, soon convinced Kitchener that he must, as far as the Khedive was concerned, abandon Gorst's policy of conciliation. The revelation that Abbas had sold to an Italian syndicate an option on the Maruit railway ; the gross irregularities which had come to light in connection with the administration of the Waqf Department which controlled large funds bequeathed by pious donors for religious and charitable objects, and the Khedive's opposition to Kitchener's creation of a single legislative body to take the place of the two former bodies and designed to give representation to minorities and interests which previously had had no voice, made it plain to Kitchener that Abbas must follow the fate of his grandfather and be removed.

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On the morning of June 18th, 1914, Kitchener left

the Residency at Cairo for the Gare Centrale on his way to Alexandria. He was bound for England on a short vacation. The day was fine and warm. From the barracks on the Champs de Mars beyond the Kasr en-Nil bridge came the sound of bugles. At the station a distinguished company was waiting to bid him good-bye. He was content. He had brought Egypt safely through the hazardous complications of his three years' occupancy. The country was tranquil and his reforms beginning to bear fruit. He would return with powers to deal with the Khedive as he saw fit and all would be well. He bade farewell to the assembled company and embarked that day for Trieste. The Khedive had already left for his usual summer visit to Constantinople. Neither was to see Egypt again. Within two months the stroke of doom had sounded. The fearful responsibilities laid on Kitchener by the outbreak of the Great War prevented his return, and Abbas, by the fiat of England, remained an exile.

XI

PRE-WAR. THE COMMITMENTS TO FRANCE. THE
TEMPEST APPROACHES. RECALLED FROM DOVER.

IN the spring of 1914 great strikes were taking place in Russia, where an increase in the Army estimates had aroused violent and abusive protests in the German and Austrian press. Roumania and Hungary were at loggerheads. Turkey was expelling thousands of Greeks from her territory. There was a general seething and unrest in the Balkans, and the peace treaty just signed between Turkey and Serbia at Constantinople, was soon to go the way of all peace treaties. In France charges were being made of corruption in the army, that it lacked guns, ammunition, aerial defences, wireless installations and two million boots. A Cabinet had resigned on June 2nd. Ribot had formed another which had resigned on the 12th. Viviani headed a third on the 13th, all within a fortnight. Madame Caillaux was being tried for the murder of Gaston Calmette, and the Selection Committee of the Paris Salon had decided not to admit a bust of Emperor William to the Exhibition.

In England, one saw women chained to the railings of the Palace attempting to speak on suffrage. In Hyde Park the platforms of suffragette meetings were broken to pieces, the women struck, mauled, torn and hunted, whilst, close at hand, an orderly throng watched the beautiful English horses and their immaculate riders

in Rotten Row. At the Military Tournament at Olympia a small pale woman rose in that immense place, before a vast audience, and attempted to address the King who sat meanwhile imperturbable in the Royal Box. An indescribable uproar arose. The little woman, surrounded by an auriole of waving arms, shaking fists, angry faces and policemen, was ejected. Immediately, one after another, other women rose and the scene was repeated. Throughout the country, houses were being burnt, bombs set off, museums closed, and food forced down the throats of the hunger-strikers, whilst Cabinet Ministers went about their business on the run, glancing apprehensively to the right and left like frightened rabbits. Asquith's Home Rule bill was arousing factional antagonisms of intense bitterness and Ulster was arming with Mauser rifles. Devlin, in a speech at Glasgow, had said that Carson was trying to "bully the Crown, browbeat Parliament, corrupt the Army and create general hell in these islands". The Government had determined to coerce Ulster and it was said had secretly decided on a *coup d'état*, but it was reported from Curragh that if active operations were begun against it, over a hundred British officers stationed there would prefer to be dismissed.

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But to many of those careless and comfortable people, undistracted by poverty, misfortune or illness, to whom these events were but entertaining incidents (the inevitable concomitants of the Tragi-Comedy of human existence) to be read about in one's morning paper at

the breakfast table it seemed later, looking back, as if that summer had about it something mild, benign and at the same time exhilarating beyond any past experience—as if an indifferent Deity, moved at last by the thought of all those multitudes who before another year had passed would have been torn from life, had spread over the world a golden glow of specious glamour, producing an illusory psychosis which increased the sensibilities, making beauty still more beautiful, pleasure still more charming, murmuring as He looked down upon a doomed world, “You have so little time in which to be happy”.

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Never had there been a season of such perfect weather. Perhaps one passed dreamful indolent days on the river, lounging in some quiet reach or watching its varied population. Ascot might entice one, perhaps on Gold Cup day. The King and Queen drive over from Windsor and down the course, the white breeches of the postilions rising and falling to the gait of the horses. Cheers rise in the air, the King lifts his hat, slowly, gravely, with an automatic gesture. How many times he has had to do this before! The band plays and the enclosure is crowded with the latest Parish fashions. Perhaps one strolls on the heath, returning in time to see the race for the Gold Cup, where Aleppo wins.

In London by day, day after day, London's soft smoky silvery sky was shot through with sunshine; by night the starriest of starry skies spread above it. In the West End the parks were filled with flowers,

heavy carriages rolled, liveried servants came and went. Life moved with pomp and pride ; in the streets walked prosperous and splendid people, in the squares delightful children played, and occasionally, with a stir and an opening out of traffic, Royalty would pass swiftly through. By day a city of stately mansions, beautiful young women, magnificent tall young men in top hats, innumerable green open spaces, prancing horses, the music of military bands, and by night a dusky world of shaded lamps, soft confusion, the Russian opera at Drury Lane, the dancing of Karsavina, and the shining lights and thudding doors of motors.

If, one morning in that perfect month of June, a casual saunterer had turned down past the Ritz, he would have seen members of the clubs in St. James's Street going in and coming out as one sees them now. At St. James's Palace sentries would be standing as they still stand. At the Palace, if the King was making ready to go to Windsor, perhaps part of his entourage would be already leaving, at one of the entrances a carpet would be laid down, lackeys in knee breeches and scarlet coats would be moving about, and perhaps a motor, in which were ladies of the Court, would pass through the gates followed by an omnibus filled with servants. If the saunterer crossed before the Palace and entered Birdcage Walk, he would see in the barracks enclosure, squads of soldiers going through their evolutions as they do now. To the right the Byzantine tower of Westminster Cathedral would rise above the trees, streets would open out, parks and gardens would lie about him, statues would stand out against the soft misty sky, against which would rise too, a horizon of

roofs, columns, trees, and chimneys. London would lie before and around him, immense, disordered, picturesque, beautiful and ugly.

This was the London of 1914. It is still the same. Life goes on as before. But yesterday, King George was still there watching over his people. The parks spread their enamelled surfaces before one, the columns and the statues still stand out against the sky, the Palace, the churches and the sombre masses of the Government buildings have not changed, but England has changed, *England of the days before the War has gone, never to return.*

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Whilst Kitchener was travelling to England in that month of June, 1914, a man a thousand miles away was setting out on a journey which was to be fraught with incalculable consequences of evil to the whole world. One morning during that week, the gates of the Belvedere Palace in Vienna were swung open and the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Hapsburgs, drove out in his carriage, on the way to a tour of inspection of troops in Bosnia. Later his wife was to join him and they were to go together to Sarajevo.

Kitchener reached Dover on Tuesday, June 23rd, and motored from there to Broome, ten miles away. Work was going on, and while his plans for changing the levels of the floors had practically gutted the interior, enough had been done to show that the result would improve the proportions of the rooms. The Park,

in full leaf, looked its best, drowsing in the June sunshine.

He stopped at Weston's cottage for the night and motored to London the next day. He was to be Ralli's guest whilst he was in England. On Saturday he went to Taplow Court to spend the week-end with Lord Desborough and on Monday, with the morning papers, came the news of the murder of the Archduke and his wife by a political fanatic.

How strange the concatenation of events! How little did they know in that house, as they read the details of the Archduke's murder, in the drowsy stillness of a summer morning, that they were reading Kitchener's own death warrant, that the news meant bitter sorrow for the house of Grenfell and half a million British homes, that for that shot fired at Sarajevo, nine million dead would strew a thousand battlefields, and that a catastrophe was about to devastate the world, which had no parallel in human history for the insignificance of its causes, the vastness of its operations, its senseless slaughter, its vindictiveness, cruelty, ineptitude, and stupidity and for the paucity of first-class brains engaged in its political or military prosecution and in its final settlement.

But for the moment it seemed as if the Austrian tragedy would not be followed by disaster. It seemed as if efforts were being made to erase it from the public mind. Forecasts as to its political consequences were strangely lacking. No member of the Austrian Imperial house travelled to Sarajevo to accompany the bodies to Vienna, and no Royal representative from any crowned head in Europe attended the funeral ceremony. The

bodies (the Archduchess was denied interment in the Hapsburg vaults because of her non-royal blood), were taken from the Royal Chapel on their last journey.

"Black and gloomy storm clouds gathered over the land ; torches cast a weird light on the sodden road in front of the two tall black hearses in which the coffins of the murdered pair jolted towards the Danube. They were travelling to Artstetten, to the vault which the Archduke himself had built. Suddenly a fearful storm broke, the horses were unharnessed, and after a time the coffins were carried back into the little waiting-room of Pochlarn station. Once again they stood cold and silent, as though doomed never to find the rest they sought. Later, when they reached the Danube, heavy waves lashed by rain, overflowed the banks, as the coffins were borne at last, on the black ferry boat, over the river."¹⁰¹

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Since that December day in 1905 when the Ministers of the new Liberal Government went to the Palace in a dense fog to receive their Seals of Office, Sir Edward Grey had continued the military conversations with France, begun by Lord Lansdowne. Except for the Prime Minister, no one knew of them. There had been rumours from time to time and questions had been asked in the House of Commons. In answer to these questions both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary had repeatedly denied that there was any agreement between the two countries. This was a deliberate evasion of the facts. The House of Commons, therefore, was kept in ignorance of these conversations,

and it was not until 1911 that the rest of the Cabinet was informed. The Agadir crisis brought this about. Grey states that there was no reluctance to have the whole matter discussed by the Cabinet, but Snowden in his Memoirs says that Grey only communicated the negotiations and arrangements under pressure. At this time Asquith displayed a mild apprehension that Grey was becoming too deeply committed and sent him the following letter :

“ My dear Grey,

Conversations such as that between Gen. Joffre and Col. Fairholme seem to me rather dangerous, especially the part which refers to possible British assistance. The French ought not to be encouraged, in present circumstances, to make their plans on any assumption of this kind.

Yours always,
H. H. A.”¹⁰³

Grey replied :

“ My dear Asquith,

It would create consternation if we forbade our military experts to converse with the French. No doubt these conversations and our speeches have given an expectation of support. I do not see how that can be helped. . . .”¹⁰⁴

Consternation to whom? And if to the French, who are evidently meant, why not? Grey says in his “Memoirs”, commenting on this exchange of letters :

“ It will be observed that these letters relate, not to a general expectation on the part of France that

military support would be forthcoming, but to an expectation concerned only with the Agadir crisis and formed partly on the speeches we had made in public with reference to that crisis."

What else but a general expectation could these conversations, extending over a period of years, lead to? The conversations carried on since 1905, could not have had for their object the dealing with the Agadir crisis, which could not have been foreseen, nor with any other specific crisis, but must have been intended to be a general arrangement designed to meet any crisis which might arise between France and Germany. But Grey was pro-French and his leanings in that direction finally committed the British Government so irrevocably that it could not escape, if it would, when the crisis came.

What was the state of England at that time?

In his budget speech, three months before the calamity of August, 1914, occurred, Mr. Lloyd George was able to report an unprecedented state of national prosperity. Trade was expanding, unemployment had touched the lowest point in the records, wealth was increasing and the national revenue was bounding up. In the eight years before 1914 exports had increased by nearly forty per cent. and the assessable income of taxpayers had risen from £925,000,000 to £1,167,000,000.¹⁰⁵ All this, together with a million British lives, was to be thrown away.

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For nearly a month after the Austrian tragedy, a period of tranquillity followed, to be shattered by the

Austrian ultimatum to Serbia which was made public on the morning of July 23rd. On the day after, Herr Ballin who had just arrived in England, sat next to Mr. Churchill at a dinner party. In answer to a question of Churchill's with reference to the political situation in Europe, Ballin said, "I remember old Bismarck telling me the year before he died, that one day the Great European War would come out of some damned foolish thing in the Balkans".¹⁰⁶

Asquith in his diary, is occupied throughout the first three and a half weeks of July with the Irish question, with the conference of the Conservative, Liberal and Irish parties at Buckingham Palace, with political intrigues, negotiations and counter-negotiations all dealing with domestic matters, and it was not until July 24th, the day of Ballin's remark to Churchill, that he writes :

"At 3.15 we had a Cabinet, where there was a lot of talk about Ulster, but the real interest was Grey's statement of the European situation, which is about as bad as it can possibly be. Austria has sent a bullying and humiliating ultimatum to Serbia, who cannot possibly comply with it, and demands an answer in forty-eight hours, failing which, she will march."

And Dr. Dillon had cabled to the *Daily Telegraph* from Vienna, that Austria, tired of the constant political agitation carried on by Serbia among Serbian nationals under Austrian rule, had purposely made her demands so humiliating that Serbia would not accept, because

it was Austria's intention to give Serbia a drubbing that would silence her political agitators for good. On the 26th, news came that Serbia had capitulated with reservations. The reservations were unacceptable to Austria and on the 28th she declared war. On August 1st Asquith received word that Russia had begun to mobilize. He, Sir William Tyrrell, Sir Bonham Carter and Sir Eric Drummond, worked far into the night drafting an appeal which they proposed that the King should send personally to the Czar. At one-thirty in the morning, Asquith and Tyrrell drove to the Palace. The King was awakened and came down in his dressing-gown to the room in which they were waiting. The telegram was read to him, and he agreed to its being sent. In St. Petersburg, Sir George Buchanan was making similar efforts and in response to these appeals it is said that the Czar countermanded by telephone the order for mobilization but that his commands were ignored by Sazonoff and the General Staff. Grey, who was stopping with Haldane in Queen Anne's Gate, was meanwhile making desperate efforts to localize hostilities.

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The Continental statesmen and diplomats were responsible for the situation which now faced Europe, but they were not altogether to blame. They had spent their lives in the service of that pitiless abstraction called the State and service of the State stultifies the mind and blunts the understanding. Their lives had been spent in the atmosphere of courts, of ceremonies, of state dinners, of calls, of gossip and scandals, always in the atmosphere of the exalted, where the clash of

ambitions, the race for power and position seems to destroy the characters of men. They had lost touch with reality. To them the great masses of the people, seen dimly through the clouds which surrounded the Olympian heights on which they lived, counted as nothing, except as masses to be weighed against other masses in adjusting the balance of power or as a force to be used at their pleasure. Their doctrine was that of that rigid idealist, Trotsky, who wrote that, "Political morals proceed from politics themselves and are one of its functions". This, the principle which guided their actions, allowed great latitude of conduct, but made it impossible for one man to trust another.

And now terror seized them. The crazy and inflammable structure which they had built up, fabricated of public treaties and secret treaties of alliances and counter-alliances, of intrigues and counter-intrigues, lies, greeds, personal hatreds, ambitions and jealousies, had at last caught fire. Their responsibility to nothing except the State, which in turn is without morality, their long apprenticeship in its service, the mentality developed by it, had given them an unreal sense of values. Common sense, which could prevent any war, was absent from their mental equipment, but even they realized at last that they were letting loose elemental forces and that in the catastrophe which might follow they themselves, secure for so long in their positions of prominence, prestige and power, might disappear. Floods of exchanges therefore began to flow between the capitals; there were conferences, recriminations, quarrels, even tears; only the War Party in each country was happy and exultant; destruction was on the way,

and destruction was their business ; in an hour, a day, a week, they would be taking over, and then the fun would begin.

The British Government was in a serious predicament. It had committed itself so deeply to the French that to abandon them would be to earn their undying hatred and contempt. Grey, in a painful interview, told Cambon, the French Ambassador, that England could give no pledges ; the military conversations which had been going on for so many years, committed England to nothing. But at Downing Street he stated that if an out-and-out and uncompromising policy of non-intervention at all costs was adopted, he would go.¹⁰⁷ Churchill was for immediate mobilization, but the majority of the Cabinet was against participation and it was plain at this time that the support of the public would be lacking in a quarrel in which, as Balfour said, "No British interest was involved". The Government then was faced with the prospect of an unpopular war in which it had involved the country without its knowledge or the recriminations and rage of a France to which it had morally committed itself.

Germany released it from this embarrassing situation by the invasion of Belgium, and England entered the war, not because the neutrality of Belgium had been violated, but because of her commitments to France and because Germany's act raised indignation in England to a point which gave the Government the popular support it needed.¹⁰⁸ Lloyd George says, "The war had leaped into popularity from Saturday to Monday".

But what of Kitchener during these fateful days ?

On Friday, July 31st, the heads of all Missions abroad were ordered to their posts. That morning Kitchener drafted a proclamation to be issued in Egypt in case England should find herself at war before he could reach there, and left for Broome.

On Saturday he telephoned to London for the latest news, using the only available telephone, that at the village post office, and on Monday, August 3rd, motored from Broome to Dover. A special would be waiting for him at Calais to take him to Marseilles where he would board a man-of-war for Alexandria, but hardly had he left Broome when the village post office received a call for him from London. When the information was given that Lord Kitchener had left for Dover, it was requested that a message be telephoned to Dover Pier that Lord Kitchener was to call up a certain number in London immediately on his arrival. This message was handed to him as he stepped from his car. He called the number given and was asked to return. The Government had sent for him.

During the next forty-eight hours a series of conferences were held as to how the country could best make use of his services. Many suggestions were made, consultations were held with the leaders of the Opposition, the Foreign Office which was loth to lose his services had to be dealt with, but no evidence has been discovered that at this fateful hour, Kitchener the most distinguished living soldier was consulted as to the general situation by a Government which was hovering on the edge of war. It seems as if at this time the Cabinet's principal military advisers were Sir John

French and Sir Henry Wilson, who thought that hostilities would be over in three months, which indeed was the universal opinion. If Kitchener had had the opportunity his solemn warning of what the war would really mean might have changed the course of history.

In the meantime whilst Kitchener waited, the pressure of public opinion grew in volume until it became irresistible, the nation wanted Kitchener as Secretary of State for War and meant to have him and on Wednesday, August 5th (England's ultimatum to Germany had expired at midnight and she was then at war) Asquith asked him to accept that office.

No one but Kitchener realized at this time what this war was to mean ; no one but he foresaw the scope and vastness of the responsibilities the Government had undertaken. If he accepted, the main burden would rest on him. He was sixty-four. His life had been one of strain and hardship. The leg which he had broken in India caused him at times a good deal of tiring pain. If only there were someone else to shoulder this burden, but there was no one—he knew that—no one but Kitchener. He thought of this not with pride, but with humility. Circumstances had given him an unequalled prestige throughout the Empire. The Empire called for him in its hour of need. It was his duty to accept.

He made one condition. That when the war was over he should return to his post in Egypt.

* * * * *

That afternoon a war council was held. Churchill in "The World Crisis" says of this meeting :

"Decision was required upon the question how

should we wage the war that had just begun. Those who spoke for the War Office knew their own minds and were united. The whole British Army should be sent to France according to what may justly be called the Haldane Plan. Everything in that Minister's eight years tenure of the War Office had led up to this and had been sacrificed for this. To place an army of four or six divisions of infantry, thoroughly equipped with their necessary cavalry, on the left of the French line within twelve or fourteen days of the order to mobilize, and to guard the home island meanwhile by the fourteen Territorial divisions he had organized, was the scheme upon which, aided by Field-Marshal Nicholson and French he had concentrated all his efforts and his stinted resources. It had been persistently pursued and laboriously and minutely studied. Decision then turned upon the place to which they should be despatched. Lord Roberts inquired whether it was not possible to base the British Army at Antwerp so as to strike, in conjunction with the Belgian Armies, at the flank and rear of the invading German hosts. We were not able, from an Admiralty point of view, to guarantee the sea communications of so large a force on the enemy side of the Straits of Dover, but only inside the Anglo-French flotilla cordon which had already taken up its station. *Moreover, no plans had been worked out by the War Office for such a contingency. They had concentrated all their thought upon integral co-operation, with the French left wherever that might be. It was that or nothing.*" The italics are the author's.

Five years before, Kitchener had said to Rawlinson in Tokio, referring to the military conversations which were going on between England and France, with a view to a combined plan of campaign if Germany attacked France :

“I do not like this. We will have no plan of our own and it will mean inevitably that we shall be tacked on to a French plan which might not suit us.”

And now this prophecy was to be fulfilled to the letter. The sorry four years' tragedy was about to begin.

XII

10 DOWNING STREET. KITCHENER'S WARNING. AT
THE WAR OFFICE. A HERCULEAN TASK. MONS.
THE PARIS CONFERENCE. THE MARNE.

THE Cabinet Room at No. 10 seemed hardly to possess the characteristics one would expect of such a historic meeting place. It was about the size of a drawing-room in an average London house and, indeed, looked like such a room put to more utilitarian uses. Some maps were tacked against its white panelling. A couple of bookshelves of plebeian character and evidently belonging somewhere else stood near a window; another map was spread on a drawing table supported by horses of unpainted deal. The long conference table of mahogany, looking like a Georgian dining-table, stretched its length along the centre of the room, covered with a table-cloth of baize and was so wide when chairs were placed around it that one was obliged to squeeze past the double columns on either side of the room to get from one end to the other.

Around this table at the War Council held on August 5th, 1914, were seated Mr. Asquith, Lord Kitchener, Mr. Churchill, Prince Louis of Battenberg, Lord Haldane, Sir Ian Hamilton, Sir John French, Sir Henry Wilson, Sir Maurice Hankey, Sir Archibald Murray, Lord Roberts, Sir Edward Grey, Sir Douglas Haig, and Sir James Grierson. Kitchener, who was to

hold no official position until the next day was there at the invitation of the Prime Minister.

Four of these men, Asquith, Grey, Haldane and Churchill, had the look of clerics; Asquith and Grey might have been English bishops, Haldane a French curé, Churchill a well-fed Roman Catholic priest from Ireland. French, heavy and thick, looked the downright military man that he was; Wilson, with his grotesque countenance, a swashbuckling soldier of fortune; Battenberg, the grand seigneur; Haig, the beau sabreur.

What thoughts were passing through the minds of these men as they sat at that table in the Cabinet Room? A sense of the gravity of the moment must have rested more or less heavily on them, but this would not preclude speculations personal to themselves. Asquith, looking at Wilson, was thinking perhaps, "Now that the soldiers are to play a leading part, that man will have greater opportunities for mischief than ever before", and wished that he had sent him to Bermuda as he had thought of doing after the Curragh incident.¹⁰⁰ Churchill's brilliant and active brain was perhaps occupied for the moment with naval, to the complete exclusion of political, stratagems. French may have been wondering whether he would prove to be equal to the job they had given him, and, afraid of Kitchener, as they all were, was asking himself, if he were not, how long Kitchener would allow him to stop in France. Wilson was thinking of Kitchener, too, perhaps, with that jealous antagonism he had always felt toward him. Prince Louis, it may be, was reviewing mournfully his long and honourable career in the British Navy and fearing

that the accident of his German ancestry might soon put an end to it. Douglas Haig, handsome and soldierly, with polished manners but strangely inarticulate, was probably occupied only with the problems at hand; and Haldane, perhaps, was thinking of the Expeditionary Force, which was his creation, with secret pride, tempered by the thought that after all, he, French and Wilson should have had an alternative plan or two worked out in case the original one, that of supporting the French left, proved impracticable.

And Grey. Of what was Grey thinking, he whose policy had made this council necessary? Of them all it was on Grey's thoughts that one would not wish to speculate.

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Lloyd George states that it was Sir John French who proposed that the Expeditionary Force be sent to Antwerp, but Churchill credits Lord Roberts with this suggestion. It would be strange if French had made it. He had been Chief of the Imperial General Staff from the middle of March, 1912, until his resignation after the Curragh incident four months previously, and he must have known the difficulty of carrying out a plan on the scale proposed for which no previous arrangements had been made. However, Wilson in his diary says that the proposal was French's and calls it ridiculous. French then suggested going over at once and deciding what to do on arriving. Haig suggested not going at all for two or three months, but Wilson explained that the War Office had no resources except for a short war.

The situation at this time was as follows. On August 2nd the Russians had crossed the German frontier. Four days before, the Austrians had bombarded Belgrade, German and Russian cruisers had been fighting in the Baltic, and the British third flotilla on the day this meeting was held had engaged German warships in the North Sea. The German armies had invaded Luxemburg, France and Belgium, and on the day before had begun the bombardment of Liège. Some of the council thought that Liège was in Holland.

It was finally decided that the Expeditionary Force be sent over at once. The question then to be settled was how far forward it was to concentrate. Kitchener favoured Amiens; French, Wilson and the majority of military opinion, Maubeuge. Kitchener suggested that a French officer be sent for at once so as to get in closer touch with the French. This suggestion was adopted and the Council adjourned until the following day, when a representative of the French General Staff would be able to be present.

On Thursday morning another meeting was held. In the meantime, in response to the message telegraphed at Kitchener's suggestion that a French officer be sent over, Colonel Huguet had arrived from the French General Headquarters. Colonel Huguet had been for some time previously the French Military Attaché in London. He was a friend of Wilson's, who was fanatically pro-French. Kitchener stated afterwards that it was definitely decided at this meeting that the Expeditionary Force was to concentrate at Amiens and that Huguet was so instructed.¹¹⁰ The Prime Minister and Kitchener then left for the Palace. At this time

all this part of the town was packed with people, and they went out to find Downing Street a sea of faces. Vehicular traffic through Whitehall and Trafalgar Square was almost completely stopped. Great Scotland Yard was crowded with men waiting to enlist. Before Charing Cross station, from which came sounds of cheering as train-loads of French reservists left for Folkestone, the old flower vendors were selling small British flags instead of nosegays. Masses of humanity, increasing in number each moment, were packed before the Palace. War, that thrilling word which wakes something sleeping but permanent in man's nature, stirring his pulses with a strange, wild, un-reasoning joy, was having its expected psychological effect and waking the nation to action.

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At ten minutes to one the War Office telephoned to Rolls-Royce Ltd. that it required a suitable car for the use of Lord Kitchener for an indefinite period. The Rolls-Royce people asked when it was wanted and were told, "In five minutes time". Collis, one of their available chauffeurs, was sent with the car to the War Office, but Lord Kitchener was not there. He was at the Palace, where he had gone to be sworn in as Secretary of State for War and to receive the Seals of Office. Collis followed him there and later drove him to the War Office.

At the War Office Kitchener climbed the marble staircase to the first floor and passed through Creedy's office to the private room of the Minister. It could not have pleased his critical taste. The walls were

panelled in mahogany badly designed and a spurious barrel vaulting of plaster curved above his head, but two fine Adam mantelpieces of marble, one at each end of the room, taken from the old War Office buildings in Pall Mall, saved the interior from mediocrity and to refresh one's eye Kent's beautiful eighteenth-century façade of the Horse Guards, where many years before Kitchener had received a scolding from the Duke of Cambridge, faced him across the expanse of Whitehall. The furniture, upholstered in green leather, was solid and comfortable. The Minister's desk, a fine piece of mahogany with drawers at either side extending to the floor, stood near a window at the southern end of the room, where in cold weather the Minister's back would be warmed by the fire in the fireplace six feet away. Between the Minister's desk and the fireplace at the north end, a long table, around which were arranged eight or ten chairs, was used for various conferences and meetings.

Kitchener walked to his desk, sat down, and, picking up a pen lying on a tray which Haldane had brought with him on assuming office eight years before, began to write. The pen, old and caked with ink, did not function.

Neither, for the moment, did the War Office. Forty-five out of the seventy General Staff officers employed there had departed, or were about to depart, for the Front. The Imperial General Staff had practically ceased to exist.

He sat for a moment looking across Whitehall to the Horse Guards, where the sentries mounted on their chargers were still stationed. Never before had such

a weight of responsibility rested on human shoulders, and he alone knew this. He alone realized what the war really meant, the magnitude of the struggle the Empire had embarked on, without armies, without barracks for armies, without guns, without ammunition, without machinery for making ammunition, without machines for making ammunition-making machinery, without uniforms, clothing, boots, tents, equipment of every conceivable kind, and without an administrative organization with which to create them, or with which to conduct the war itself.

The legend still persists, deliberately fostered by some, that Kitchener must do everything himself. This was true of the first days of the War. Centralization during those first critical weeks was forced on him. Until a new Staff could be gathered together he was forced to keep the reins of that whole vast business in his own hands, otherwise nothing would have been accomplished. As soon, however, as his organization was complete and the War Office functioning once more, he relinquished control of the various departments to their appointed heads.

Influenced by the optimistic prophecies of French and Wilson that the whole business would be over and finished in three months, the Government's instructions to the War Office at the time war was declared had been one hundred and fifty thousand men, seven divisions, for (to be on the safe side) six months. That morning at Downing Street before going to the Palace, Kitchener had told a sceptical Cabinet that the War would last three years and that seventy divisions would be needed instead of seven, and now he must set to work to

transform England into a great military power. The European nations had built up and perfected their military establishments during generations with material used to, and expecting, military service. Kitchener must accomplish this with a free people without military training to whom conscription was unknown, and he must accomplish it whilst England was at war. He realized the magnitude of his job from every point of view except one. He did not fully realize the difficulties of conducting a war in conjunction with a Cabinet of twenty-odd civilian politicians who, whilst yielding to none in their devotion to their country, never forgot (with an eye to the main chance) that the War would end some time but that politics would go on for ever.

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But he must get to work and the first thing was to see Huguet again before he returned to France. He was told that Huguet had already left. Wilson had sent him back on his own responsibility without informing Kitchener. He sent for Wilson, and his first interview in his office was a stormy one. Wilson adopted a tone inexcusable toward a superior. Things were not beginning too well. It looked as if Huguet's instructions as to Amiens had been countermanded, for on the 12th he and two other French officers were back again and the discussion was renewed. Wilson wrote on this day :

“ At three o'clock, we six, Sir John, Archie [Gen. Sir Archibald Murray], self and three Frenchmen met in Lord K.'s room at the War Office. There

we wrangled with K. for three hours. K. wanted to go to Amiens. . . . He still thinks the Germans are coming north of the Meuse in great force and will swamp us before we concentrate."

Kitchener refused to consent to the plan of concentration advocated by French and the others unless the Prime Minister agreed to it. He and French then went to Downing Street. Kitchener being in a minority of one to four, the Prime Minister decided in favour of the majority and the Expeditionary Force crossed the Channel to be swallowed up in the storm of battle which was raging there.

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A curtain of silence then descended, blotting out northern France until August 24th, when news began to come in. The events of the ensuing week proved that Kitchener, in foreseeing the German plan, was right, that the commanders of the English and French armies were wrong and that the British Expeditionary Force had narrowly escaped annihilation.

Sir John French, having insisted on going too far forward, now insisted on going too far back. On personal grounds, there was some justification for this. The French plan of campaign had failed utterly, French's own forces had been roughly handled and had suffered heavy casualties, he had been misinformed and unsupported by the French and treated with inexcusable rudeness by General Lanrezac. His faith in his allies had received such a shock that in bitter resentment he wrote to Kitchener on August 30th that he refused to

remain in the fighting line. He intended to withdraw south of the Seine and for a time at least discontinue operations.

This ultimatum was received in London with consternation. Even the civilian Cabinet realized the impossibility of French's attitude. It was true that he had been let down, ignored and insulted, but, as Kitchener had said, we were "tied to the French" and at this critical moment must not abandon their armies which were being driven back toward Paris by the German hosts. Things were looking black for the Allies : during the week just past three hundred thousand Frenchmen had been killed, wounded or taken prisoners. Paris itself was in a state of panic. People were leaving it by hundreds of thousands, by road, by rail, in motors, in wagons, on horses, on foot. Trains were being backed into the stations of the railways going south, filled with people and pulled out. Their places taken by others. This went on without stopping and even then crowds would wait for days before finding places. The Government was preparing to leave ; three days later it had established itself at Bordeaux with the Allied Embassies. It was impossible that French should be allowed to watch this debacle passively. To quote Asquith's diary :

"We were a good deal mystified and perturbed by the war news and particularly by French's determination to retire beyond the Seine, which would mean that for at least a week to come he would be of no effective use to the French, notwithstanding the further German advance. A telegram in this sense,

in reply to our remonstrance earlier in the day, came in just before midnight and I had a conference at 12 p.m. downstairs with Kitchener and Winston, McKenna and Jack Pease and later, Lloyd George. We came to the decided conclusion that the only thing to be done was for Kitchener to go there without delay and unravel the situation. He is a real sportsman when an emergency offers and went straight home to change his clothes and started by special train from Charing Cross about 1.30 this morning. Winston provided him with a fast cruiser at Dover, when he would make his way from Havre to Paris. Hardly a dozen people realize that he is not at the War Office today."

On reaching Paris, Kitchener drove to the Embassy through empty streets. Paris, the gay, the brilliant, looked like a city of the dead. French, summoned from his headquarters, arrived tired and irritable. At this interview, Kitchener, French, Bertie, the British Ambassador, Millerand, French Minister of War, and Viviani, the Foreign Minister, were present. Kitchener had intended a visit to the British Army, but French objected on the ground that Kitchener was wearing the uniform of a Field-Marshal. As French objected Kitchener gave way. A general discussion followed. French obstinately adhered to his previous determination. He stated that the direction of the operations in the field should be left in the hands of the military chiefs in command of the field, but this was a truism which must be ignored in the face of the present crisis. It was more important to save Paris than French's

amour propre. The Frenchmen then suggested that both Kitchener and French should see Joffre, hoping that such an interview might lead to a general agreement. French, jealous of Kitchener's authority, objected again. They seemed to be getting nowhere, when Kitchener asked for a private room in which he and French could talk together alone.

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It will never be known what passed in that room, but the result of the interview changed the course of history. French, the fighter hardened in many wars, left it subdued, sobered and obedient, the British Army turned to help the French and the German advance was stopped.

Ten days later the head of the Press Bureau, Mr. F. E. Smith, later Lord Birkenhead, brought to Kitchener in his room at the War Office for approval a communique for publication in which the battle of the Marne was described as an "important success". Kitchener crossed out these words and substituted "decisive victory". This statement seemed to Smith to be so sweeping that he called Kitchener's attention to it to make sure that that was what was meant. Kitchener's reply was that the words as he had written them were correct.¹¹¹

There is something astounding about such foresight. A mad world was to pass through four more years of legalized murder by land and by sea. On the Western Front a stalemate followed and for four more years the opposing armies, locked in a death struggle swayed backward and forward over a barrier of corpses extending from Switzerland to the Channel. Joffre, asked

whether Bonaparte could have put an end to this impasse, answered, "Bonaparte, ah yes, *he* would have thought of something". But if the War was to be finished on the Western Front there was only one thing which would end it, lacking common sense on both sides, and that was exhaustion. Bonaparte could have found no other way. And so the bloody business carried on. The barrier of corpses, blown to pieces, dug under, rotting into dust, was being continually added to. For four years this horror was to continue, a hell of bombardments, barrages, bombings, night raids, attacks and counter attacks, bayonetings, bludgeonings, stabbings, smotherings, chokings. Four years of senseless slaughter. But the World War was won, and lost, at the Battle of the Marne.

XIII

LONDON IN WAR TIME. CRITICISMS OF
KITCHENER'S POLICY AT GENERAL HEAD-
QUARTERS IN FRANCE. HE ADVOCATES A
WARFARE OF DEFENCE. DISTRUST OF
FRENCH.

THIS is another London. Perhaps the casual pedestrian turns from Waterloo Place to the Duke of York's Column and from the top of the steps looks across the Mall. Beyond the trees which rise between him and the Horse Guards Parade, he sees what looks like the massed ranks of soldiers. Across St. James Park bugles sound and a long line of something, something brown, with an occasional flash and glitter, crawls slowly, troops in khaki. From behind comes a sudden burst of music, and turning, Regent Street is a moving mass of uniforms, guns and horses. In Piccadilly, as he walks toward Hyde Park Corner, a regiment of Highlanders meets him, marching east. The fields in Hyde Park are filled with drilling recruits. In Rotten Row a solitary rider canters listlessly, the children have vanished, the sleek horses are gone, all the varied manifestations of the life of that earlier London seems to have been swept away, all the colour, the sparkle, the joy, the bloom has been dissolved, shattered, shaken into dust by the shuddering roll of the drums, the piercing thrill of the bugles, the

heavy tramp of feet, the thunderous rumble of the guns. England is stirring, the Empire is stirring, troops are on the move in India, Egypt and the Colonies, and from every corner of the globe Englishmen are moving toward England to offer their services in the great struggle.

The saunterer crosses to Grosvenor Place intending to walk to the Palace down Constitution Hill, but more troops bar the way, bound probably for Victoria Station. Seemingly endless lines of brown figures, of swinging boots, of puttee-covered legs, of leather belts, of polished buttons, of the flat round tops of caps above indistinguishable faces, of forests of slanting rifles, and at intervals, and raised above this torrent, but moving with it, the forms of mounted officers.

He follows them and when they have vanished within the cavernous entrances of the station turns down Victoria Street toward the Abbey. Drums sound from the left and presently from Spencer Street there pour out from the barracks of the London Scottish, companies of recruits of all sizes, complexions and physiognomies, in all varieties of clothing. They wheel to the right and march in the direction from which he has come. His progress being barred again, he turns down Spencer Street and makes his way at last toward the Palace. The soldiers on guard are now in khaki instead of in red coats. There are no ladies leaving today for Windsor but servants stand at the northern doorway and a group of men, soldiers and civilians, in uniforms or in top hats, appear from within and begin to get into the waiting motors. Some meeting with the King is just over. The motors turn towards the great gates and pass through, but in a moment come to a stop. Marching

toward the statue of the great Queen appears the head of the column of the recruits of the London Scottish. They have almost blocked the way when they are halted by the police on duty before the Palace. In the motors, stopping momentarily, he sees the Prime Minister, Kitchener, the Foreign Secretary and other public men. They sit talking earnestly in their luxurious motors, which in a moment begin to move on past the head of the waiting column. Buckingham Palace Road as far as the eye can reach is crowded with the recruits. They stand motionless watching the Ministers, but the Ministers glancing neither to the right nor to the left, gliding through the narrow space which had been made for them, absorbed in their ferocious stratagems—(Asquith had a few days before compared himself and his confreres to a gang of Elizabethan buccaneers)—pass before that silent mass of watching men, and vanish beyond the trees of the Mall.

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It being necessary now for Kitchener to have an establishment of his own he accepted Lady Wantage's offer of her house in Carlton Gardens, and moved there on Monday, August 10th. He chose one of the rooms on the ground floor for his office; FitzGerald and Arthur occupied another. The dining-room lay between. Drawing-rooms occupied the first floor, and Kitchener's bedroom that part of the second which overlooked the Mall. The house, in the Regency style, elegant and spacious, at this time had no lift. The ceilings were lofty, the stairs steep, and climbing to his

bedroom was a difficult and tedious business for Kitchener. He lived here for seven months, moving to York House the following March. He breakfasted shortly after eight and arrived at the War Office exactly at nine each morning. His luncheon, which was usually eaten there, consisted of something cold sent over from Carlton Gardens. He never looked at the morning papers but after dinner would read the evening ones deliberately and with care, sometimes taking a long time over them. Occasionally FitzGerald would send for Leggett, who was now in London, and sitting in Lady Wantage's drawing-room with Lord Kitchener they would talk about the farms in Kenya.

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The curtain having risen, events, scenes and crises now began to follow one another across the stage of this vast melodrama, greater in extent than any yet attempted by human futility and passion.

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Kitchener had immediately set to work on the creation of his new armies. Within a fortnight after his first call for a hundred thousand men he had obtained them, but his predecessors had made no arrangements for possible army expansion. Before the war men were recruited at the rate of about thirty thousand a year, after Kitchener's first call thirty thousand enlisted in one day. In one week, including enlistments in the regular army and the Territorial Force as well as the rejected, a quarter of a million men offered themselves. Immense

difficulties naturally followed such a phenomenal expansion : these potential armies must be fed, clothed, housed, equipped, trained and armed. Except for the reserves for the small Expeditionary Force there were no guns, no rifles, no ordnance stores. The arrangements for home defence were in a state of chaos. Most of the adjutants and their regular N.C.O.'s had been withdrawn to their regular units on the outbreak of the war. In the Flying Corps a majority of the officers were sent abroad and hardly any experienced pilots were left to teach the new recruits ; nearly all the qualified instructors in physical training were sent off to join their regiments at the front ; and even the Army School of Cookery was closed on mobilization and the instructors sent off to cook for Headquarters in France. Similar conditions prevailed in every branch of the service.¹¹²

Nevertheless Kitchener brought his new armies into existence with amazing speed. The First New Army of six divisions was constituted by an army order of August 21st, 1914, the Second New Army was established three weeks later, the Third and Fourth within three days ; they were for the moment mere agglomerations of raw volunteers, but they had already become organized entities ready to be delivered for the purpose for which he intended them. North, South, East and West, the country was filled with drilling recruits, in existing barracks, in isolated camps, in tents, in schools, in public institutions, in empty houses, in billets. Within a week of assuming office Kitchener had approved plans for hutments for half a million men. Later this programme was increased to a million, besides remount



LORD KITCHENER AND GENERAL JOFFRE LEAVING THE
WAR OFFICE, 1915

establishments, aeroplane sheds, hospital huts and rifle ranges. For this vast programme immense quantities of material were required, besides labour and expert superintendence. Water must be provided, gas, electric light, drainage, sanitation and roads.^{11*} The same thing was being done on land leased by Kitchener across the Channel. The politicians and the General Staff had committed themselves to France without a thought as to what these commitments might mean and Kitchener, called on at the last moment, was assuming all the responsibilities, bearing all the burdens, heaped upon the country by the obligations they had incurred. And this was in addition to the reorganization of the War Office itself and the time required for the study of the strategic problems of the war.

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Antwerp fell on October 9th and the Germans having missed their first opportunity to take the Channel Ports, began to mass for a drive to Calais. The first battle of Ypres followed. This battle, lasting for a month, ended in the middle of November with a German failure and the hostile forces, chilled and benumbed by bad weather, settled down to the miseries of trench warfare punctuated by attacks and counter-attacks. For a moment, the Germans had definitely been brought to a standstill on the Western front. A deadlock had developed which might last interminably unless something were thought of which would end it.

Asquith says that the root difficulty in the early conduct of the war on our part—a difficulty experienced

in nearly the same degree in France—was how to combine rapid and effective executive action in the various theatres with the maintenance of Cabinet responsibility and control; this was the case quite as much after as before the formation of the Coalition in May, 1915; Briand, speaking of cabinet meetings, says: "We waste three hours talking and talking without making any decisions",¹¹⁴ and Viviani exclaims to Millerand: "What is the use in discussing it, nothing will be done".¹¹⁵ In England military plans and suggestions began to pour in from every source; politicians with or without office, newspaper proprietors, civil servants: Lloyd George wished to transfer the entire British Army to the Balkans; Churchill, finally induced by Asquith to return from Antwerp where, dallying with dreams of military glory, he had been contemplating resigning from the Admiralty, was already flirting with the idea of forcing the Dardanelles, Sir John Fisher advocated operations against the coast of Schleswig-Holstein; French was for clearing the Germans away from the Belgian coast and Joffre for a combined Anglo-French offensive. Kitchener's own contribution to this collection of ideas was a landing at Alexandretta on the coast of Asia Minor. This plan which Kitchener reverted to more than once he finally abandoned with reluctance because the French Government would not consent to it for political reasons. Amid all these proposals, nothing for the moment was done. The Secretary of State for War must obey the agreed decisions of the Cabinet and these decisions sometimes took a long time to materialize.

The politicians, having recovered from the first

shock of war, were beginning, amidst the dangers which beset the Empire, to play the political game once more. Haldane was being attacked by the *Daily Express*. Kitchener sent Sir George Arthur to see Bonar Law, who, he was justified in believing, had some influence in that quarter, to tell him that, as his (Kitchener's) predecessor, Haldane's advice was of importance, and that as, if the attacks continued, Haldane's visit to the War Office must stop, he, Kitchener, would like the *Daily Express* to discontinue Haldane's persecution. Law refused, saying that the war would be over in a few months but that politics would remain and that the attacks on Haldane were a political manœuvre. Kitchener sent for Law. What passed between them is not known but the attacks stopped and in Law Kitchener made an enemy. He made an enemy of Repington, too, that inaccurate vendor of back-stairs tittle-tattle, military and social, who had somehow hypnotized Haldane into believing him to be a second Clausewitz. Kitchener had a private and justifiable reason for disliking Repington, and Repington, who knew what this reason was, resented Kitchener's attitude toward him. Kitchener gave Repington one interview at the War Office and refused to see him again. For this, Repington hated Kitchener. Here was a weapon ready to French's hand when he decided to agitate publicly the question of munitions.

At General Headquarters in France the policy of the Secretary of State for War was treated with ridicule. Wilson wrote in his diary on September 15th :

“ K.'s shadow armies, for shadow campaigns at

unknown and distant dates, prevents a lot of good officers, N.C.O.'s and men from coming out. It is a scandalous thing—under no circumstances can these mobs now being raised, without officers and N.C.O.'s without guns, rifles or uniforms, without rifle-ranges or training-grounds, without supply or transport services, without morale or tradition, knowledge or experience, under no circumstances can these mobs take the field for two years, then what is the use of them? What we want and what we must have is for our little force out here to be kept to full strength with the very best of everything. Nothing else is any good."

Two days later he wrote :

"His (Kitchener's) ridiculous and preposterous army of twenty-five corps is the laughing-stock of every soldier in Europe. It took the Germans forty years of incessant work to make an army of twenty-five corps with the aid of conscription, it will take us all eternity to do the same by voluntary effort."*

* However, it is only fair to state that Wilson frankly records, seven months later, a complete reversal of opinion. On April 17, 1915, he writes :

"Cecil and I motored to Aldershot and saw the whole 12th Division of Kitchener's Army file by, at the end of a twelve-mile route march. Undoubtedly a fine body of men in a good hard condition, and Fred Wing (G.O.C.) and Tit Willow (1st Grade G.S.) both say they are in excellent heart, and ready to take the field in 3 or 4 weeks. Most units commanded by regulars, 4 or 5 regular officers to each battalion, all O.C.s batteries regular officers, men all much better class than our regulars heretofore. Horses excellent, and beautiful mules. All musketry finished. All guns fired 25 rounds a gun, and good practice according to Wing. Howitzers still incomplete, and only 2 machine-guns per battalion; telephones incomplete. But another month ought to suffice, and I was very agreeably surprised."

Churchill, visiting the front about this time, was of a different opinion.

“I would not share the universal optimism of the Staff. It was fully believed and loudly declared on every side that if all available reinforcements and officers were sent to the army without delay, the war would be finished by Christmas. Fierce were the reproaches that the War Office was withholding vitally needed officers, instructors and material for the purpose of training vast armies that would never be ready in time. I combated these views to the best of my ability, being fully convinced of Kitchener’s commanding foresight and wisdom in resisting the temptation to meet the famine of the moment by devouring the seed-corn of the future. I repeated the memorable words he had used to the Cabinet that, ‘the British Empire must participate in the land war on the greatest scale, and that in no other way could victory be won’.”

But Kitchener at the War Office was carrying out his far-seeing policies impervious to the undisguised hostility of General Headquarters, whose criticisms and ridicule were duly reported to him, indifferent to praise or blame or to the severe and persistent pressure of immediate events.

On October 31st Kitchener crossed to Dunkirk to meet the English and French Generals. Poincaré was also there with Millerand, Ribot and Cambon. Kitchener explained that he was not happy about the fate of the little British Army. Foch promised the whole support

of the French corps, but added : " Do send us your new divisions as soon as possible ". Kitchener answered : " You will have a million men in eighteen months ". The Frenchmen stared aghast. " Eighteen months ! " cried Foch ; " I would prefer fewer men arriving sooner ". The combined influence of all the assembled statesmen and generals was brought to bear on Kitchener, but he was not to be moved. He explained that he had rented ground in France for the needs of the British armies for a preliminary period of two years, and before the end of that time British soldiers would be pouring in. Until then they must carry on as best they can.

" Two years ", muttered Ribot to Poincaré, " does he really think the war will last that long ? " ¹¹⁶

Kitchener returned far from pleased. He was annoyed and perturbed by the short-sighted optimism of French and his Staff. From the days of the South African war he had known French well, and he feared that, like a good many others, he would fall short of the requirements exacted by this greatest of all wars. From the first he had doubted the wisdom of French's appointment with which he had had nothing to do, but his sense of loyalty to the Army, which was a passion with him, made him wait. French was difficult to handle, but perhaps he would be able to manage him without too much friction. If not, he would have to go.

Back in London he saw the Prime Minister, perhaps the only politician whom he wholly trusted. Asquith wrote in his diary on November 3rd, 1914 :

" I had a long visit from K. who is far from happy about what is going on at the Front. French is still

quite confident but his losses day by day are so great that he calls urgently for more men. K. has already sent him nineteen battalions of Territorials, and he is prepared to send another division I think, but French, perhaps not unreasonably, clamours for Regulars and the eighth division, which is the only one we have in hand here at present, is still very soft and in K.'s opinion unfit for really severe fighting . . . my opinion of K.'s capacity increases daily. I think he is really a fine soldier and he keeps his head and temper wonderfully considering how he is tried."

In December French came to England and there was a meeting at Walmer Castle. Asquith writes :

"The great men have come and gone, and were really most interesting. They arrived, each with his own familiar, from Folkestone about noon and I turned them into a room to talk together for about half an hour and then joined them. I found K. with his chart of Russian and German divisions emphasizing the pessimistic point of view. French, on the other hand, would have none of it. He is quite convinced that the Germans have lost their best troops and officers and is satisfied that even if they were able to polish off the Russians and push them beyond the Vistula, which he believes to be impossible, no troops that they could bring from the East to the West could ever go through the English and French lines. He says that the troops they now bring to the front are of the worst quality and are only forced into action by battle police."

Two days later Churchill remarked to the Prime Minister : " What a good thing it is to have an optimist like French at the Front ". " Excellent ", Asquith answered, " provided you have also, as we have, like K., a pessimist at the rear ".¹¹⁷

* * * * *

Asquith had hardly known Kitchener until the latter had come to Malta from Egypt in 1911 on the *Hampshire*, the ship destined to be his coffin five years later, to confer with the Prime Minister, Churchill and Beatty on the naval and military situation in that part of the world. It was at this meeting that the Prime Minister is said to have muttered : " The British Consular Agent in Egypt seems to be better informed on naval subjects than the First Lord and his advisers ". Asquith said of Kitchener at this time : " It was impossible not to be impressed by his striking and formidable personality ". Later a sincere liking developed between these two men, so far apart in their development and training and in the diversity of their careers. Grey says of their relationship : " Asquith had the confidence, even the attachment, of Kitchener in a way that no one else in the Government had them . . . and those who knew Kitchener will realize how exceptional it was for his confidence to be given to a civilian with whom he had never worked before ".

* * * * *

On the Western Front the conduct of the War was already characterized by that lack of ideas, of imaginative conceptions, which persisted to the end. After

Kitchener's death, Haig, in his despatches, terms the terrific fighting on the Somme as "the opening of the Wearing Out Battle". This phrase is illuminative of the frame of mind of the British Higher Command. The idea, which became an obsession was to kill Germans. What it would cost to kill them seemed a matter of minor importance. The High Command seemed to renounce any attempt to achieve victory by means of surprise or manœuvre, and to confine its efforts to assembling masses of heavy guns and material of war of all kinds, concentrating division upon division of infantry in a leisurely fashion, chivalrously giving the enemy every possible warning of its intentions and to hurling these divisions at the enemy, after a bombardment lasting sometimes for weeks, sometimes for months, careless of the heavy losses entailed.¹¹⁸

From the beginning these were the tactics of those in command on the Western Front. The fact that for every two Germans killed they were killing three Englishmen did not seem to detract in their eyes from the merits of their theory of attrition, a policy persisted in by both the British and French commanders until it resulted in grave mutinies in the French Armies. Kitchener was opposed to it from the beginning, not only for tactical reasons but on the ground of common sense. In his "Gallipoli Diary", Sir Ian Hamilton quotes certain instructions sent to him:

"Lord Kitchener told me to tell you that he has no wish to interfere with the man on the spot, but from closely watching our actions here as well as those of General French in Flanders he is certain

that the only way to make a real success of an attack is by surprise. Also, that when the surprise ceases to be operative, in so far as the advance is checked and the enemy begins to collect from all sides to oppose the attackers, then, perseverance becomes merely a useless waste of life."¹¹⁹

In January Kitchener writes to French :

"I suppose we must now recognize that the French army cannot break through the German lines to bring about the retreat of the German forces from Northern Belgium. If that is so then the German lines in France may be looked on as a fortress that cannot be carried by assault and also that cannot be completely invested with the result that the lines may be held by an investing force whilst operations proceed elsewhere."¹²⁰

He spoke to Asquith in March of the reckless way in which ammunition, particularly shells, was being expended at the front, and expressed confidentially his mistrust of French's abilities.

Wilson wrote in March :

"General Headquarters was afforded serious grounds for concern by the arrival of a letter from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, dictated by Lord Kitchener, which conveyed an unmistakable hint to the effect that certain divisions of the new army which were nearly ready for dispatch to some theatre of war, would not be allotted to the Western Front because too much ammunition was being expended by the British Expeditionary Force."¹²¹

And a little later Wilson, recording an interview with Kitchener in London, reported :

“ He then spoke of a pure defensive all along the Western line, which he advocated at great length, over and over again. I said that if we could get France and Russia to agree it would be all right, otherwise it was obviously impossible.”¹¹²

In June, 1915, at Chantilly, Kitchener again advocated a defensive policy but Joffre and the three other French generals present, Foch, Castelnau and Dubrail, considered Kitchener's theory as heresy. Joffre declared that “ if we adopt purely defensive measures we shall render ourselves liable to weighty and incessant enemy attacks ”. But if there was anything in the theory of attrition and the fact that attack had proved more costly than defence then this would obviously be the thing to do as it would mean the killing of three Germans to every two of the allied soldiers, thus achieving the desired result by reversing the procedure.

French, too, was against any such plan. Stubborn, his blood up, seeing no farther than his French confreres, he was determined to slog away. In June, 1915, he wrote to Kitchener :

“ You will have learned from my letter of the 17th ultimo that I am in agreement with General Joffre as to the supreme importance of taking the offensive on the Western Front. . . . A defensive attitude on the part of the Allies . . . will allow Germany to take full advantage of her central position . . . the latter course can only be justified if it is

proved that it is impossible to break through the enemy lines. As I have informed you in my letter of the 17th ultimo and on other occasions the experiences of our own and the French attacks have convinced me that this is not the case and here again my views are in complete agreement with General Joffre. . . . In conclusion I would urge most strongly that it is very inadvisable that the role of the British Army in the field should be one of passive defence. Such a course can only have a disastrous effect on the morale and offensive spirit of our troops.”¹¹¹

This was written only a month after the ghastly failure of Festubert. To kill two Germans, French must sacrifice three Englishmen—in order to maintain the morale of the remainder. The terrific bombardments, the unnecessary wastage of human life, went on. Kitchener cried out to Lloyd George: “I will not have my soldiers murdered”. But he was powerless. This was a war of the politicians and it was being carried on by them. The hands of the one genius concerned in it, great as was his prestige and power, were bound by divided councils, by Cabinet control, and by the fact that we were “tied to the French”.

XIV

THE LONDON AND PARIS FRONTS. INTRIGUES.

GALLIPOLI. THE 29TH DIVISION.

ON the London Front and on the Paris Front battles, too, were raging—battles of intrigue for position and power carried on by politicians and place-hunting soldiers. Hoffman, one of the ablest of the German generals, recorded these impressions :

“ When one gets a close view of influential people, their bad relations with each other, their conflicting ambitions, one must always bear in mind that it is certainly much worse on the other side, i.e., the Allies.”¹²⁴

A sense of confusion, of defeat, of amazement oppresses one as one surveys the London and Paris Fronts during the Great War, a phantasmagoria of slackness, mistakes, and confused councils, of betrayals, treacheries and lies. Asquith wrote in his diary :

“ Lloyd George and Montagu have just come back from Paris where they saw all the people who count and were much surprised by the weakness of the present French Ministry. It is a kind of coalition government of all the talents, its members hating and distrusting one another.”

It was not much better in London, where he speaks of persistent intriguing in certain quarters. Other elements added to the confusion. Almost everyone in or out of office seemed to know what to do to win the war. Fisher, McKenna, Law, Montagu, Beresford and many others barged in with advice, suggestions and plans of campaign. Cabinet Ministers discussed affairs of State with the proprietors of the sensational Press (almost the meanest manifestation of human enterprise) and distinguished generals in responsible positions wrote indiscreet letters to Repington, which the latter quotes in his diary. In the Cabinet there were plots and quarrels.

From Asquith's Dairy :

" Old Fisher seriously proposed by way of reprisals for the Zeppelin raids, to shoot all German prisoners here and when Winston refused to embrace this statesmanlike suggestion, sent in a formal resignation of his office. I imagine that by this time he has reconsidered it. . . .

" Hankey came to see me today to say that Fisher who is an old friend of his, had come to him in a very unhappy frame of mind. He likes Winston personally but complains that on purely technical matters he is frequently overruled (' he out-argues me ') and he is not by any means at ease about the present disposition of the fleets or their future movements. Though the old man is rather difficult, I fear there is some truth in what he says."

One difficulty between Fisher and Churchill was that

Fisher invariably went to bed at nine, whilst Churchill liked consultations on naval matters to take place anywhere between ten at night and one in the morning.¹²⁵

More of Asquith :

“ There are two things fatal in war. One is to push blindly against a stone wall, the other is to scatter and divide forces in a number of separate and disconnected operations. We are in great danger of committing both blunders. Happily K. has a good judgment in these matters—never impulsive, sometimes inclined to be over-cautious, but with a wide general outlook which is of the highest value. . . . ”

“ Winston has been tactless enough to offer Sir John French, without K.’s knowledge, a brigade of his Naval Division and two squadrons of his famous armed cars, which are being hawked about from pillar to post. . . . ”

“ H. W. Massingham came here with a horrible tale which he swears can be proved to be true on the best authority. It is that Winston is intriguing hard to supplant E. Grey at the Foreign Office and to put A. J. B. in his place. There is no doubt that Winston is at the moment a complete victim to B.’s charms. Lloyd George has been here for his favourite morning indulgence, ten minutes’ discursive discussion on things in general. I asked him what he thought of the Massingham story and rather to my

surprise he said he believed it was substantially true. He thinks that Winston, for the time at any rate, allowed himself to be swallowed whole by A. J. B. on whom he, Lloyd George, after working with him for a week or two, is disposed to be rather severe. It is a pity that Winston has not a better sense of proportion. . . .”

“L. G. is for the moment red-hot with a plan for nationalizing the drink trade. . . . I warned him to go very warily. . . .”

“I had an extraordinary and really very interesting talk with L. G. We first tried to get a working agreement with Kitchener about the Munitions Committee and I think we hit upon something that ought to do. Then before he left I said I thought it right to tell him that only today I had heard sinister and, as I believed, absurd interpretations which were being given to the articles in *The Times*, *The Observer*, and *The Morning Post*. I have never seen him more moved. He vehemently disclaimed having had anything to do with the affair. K., he said, was the real culprit because in spite of every warning he has neglected up to the eleventh hour to have the proper provision of Munitions, and K., being a Tory, or supposed to be one, the Tory Press, afraid to attack him, are making me the target of their criticism.

“As for himself (L. G.) he declared that he owed everything to me, that I had stuck to him and protected him and defended him when every man’s hand was against him, and that he would rather (1) break

stones, (2) dig potatoes, (3) be hung and quartered (these were metaphors used at different stages of his broken but impassioned harangue) than do an act or say a word or harbour a thought that was disloyal to me, and he said that every one of his colleagues felt the same. His eyes were wet with tears and I am sure that with all his Celtic capacity for impassioned and momentary fervour, he was quite sincere. . . .”

“L. G. and McKenna came here today at three-thirty and we had an hour together. It was at moments rather exciting. L. G. began on a very stormy note, accusing McKenna of having inspired Donald to write the article in the *Chronicle* which was headed ‘Intrigue against the P. M.’. McKenna as hotly denied that he had ever said or suggested to Donald that L. G. was in the plot whilst admitting that he had had a talk with him on the subject of the attacks in the Tory Press. L. G. proceeded to accuse McKenna of always seeing or imagining plots, e.g., in this very matter of Winston’s supposed campaign against Grey to which McKenna rejoined that the person he really suspected was A. J. B. . . .”

“L. G. is now off thinking of anything but drink. . . .”

“In this very room in which only two days ago L. G. and McKenna were fighting like fish-wives, the same pair have just been and spent over an hour and a half with me cooing like sucking doves in a concerted chorus of argument and appeal to bring

me around to take a favourable view of L. G.'s plan of buying out the drink trade at a cost of some two hundred and fifty millions. I am bound to say that they have left me entirely unconvinced. . . ."

"I have been through a rather stormy experience. K., who is evidently a good deal perturbed, has been attacking L. G. for having disclosed to the Munitions Committee the figures which he, K., had confidentially communicated to the Cabinet. He declares that he can no longer be responsible for the War Office under such conditions. L. G. and Winston are both (the former having quite a presentable case) aggressive and the situation is for the moment all the worse, particularly as Grey, a good deal to L. G.'s chagrin, strongly champions Kitchener. All this has come literally like a bolt out of the blue. I had not the faintest premonition of it. However, by dint of appeals and warnings and gives and takes and all sorts of devices and expedients, I have succeeded in getting us back into more or less smooth water. Still, it leaves a disagreeable taste in one's mouth, particularly as L. G. let slip in the course of the altercations some injurious and wounding innuendoes which K. will be more than human to forget. *Later*: I have been talking it over with Crewe, whose judgment I rate highest of any of my colleagues. Not for years—and he agrees with me—have I been more disillusioned from the personal point of view and depressed. The man who comes out of it best is Kitchener, clumsy in expression as he often is. As Crewe says, he is one who has been

all his life accustomed to take or to give orders, and he, therefore, finds it difficult to accommodate himself to the give and take of Cabinet discussion and comradeship. He was really moved today, though I am sure he would not have persisted in his resignation, and showed in the end a largeness of mind and temper which I greatly admired. I hate this side of politics, for it compels one to revise for the worse one's estimate of men whom one likes."

Kitchener had said to a friend, speaking of the politicians, "Did you know that they were like this?" And Asquith quotes him as saying, "I am deadly sick of this system of intrigue".

Robertson wrote :

"In 1916, and throughout 1914-18 for that matter, there was much public criticism of the way in which the Government was conducting the war. It was difficult to keep clear of the political controversies which arose, though I persistently strove to give them a wide berth. To me it was of no interest how the Government was composed so long as the army got what it wanted and was not asked to undertake unsound and impracticable operations. This seemed to be the proper attitude for a soldier to take up, although perhaps it was unwise of me to discuss it as openly as I did. Since the end of the last century the professional careers of senior officers of the Army have passed by degrees entirely into the hands of Ministers and however necessary this system may be, the consequence of it is that if an officer

holding a high position shows that he has no political leanings one way or the other, he may find himself without friends in any political party and be suspected by all."

But here, in Kitchener, was a soldier who, because of his prestige at home and abroad, was more powerful than the politicians, who had no need to intrigue or bargain. This aroused their jealousy and dislike. He seemed to some to stand like a Colossus blocking their own careers, holding in his hands reins of power which they themselves would like to grasp. This man, so lonely, so silent, so absorbed and yet so formidable, so indifferent to success and yet successful beyond their most untrammelled dreams, so above all the mean stratagems of wordly ambitions, excited their envy and hatred. He must be got rid of. Rumour grew, deliberately fostered, that he was becoming a shadow of his former self, that he was suffering from a diminution of mental power—but there was no diminution of mental power. To the end his influence and prestige remained the same, except in the eyes of those politicians who wished to accomplish his downfall.

He had amazing powers of recuperation. Many an afternoon he would return to York House, where he was now living, and refusing dinner, would go to bed at once, too tired to eat, but in the morning he would be himself again and, precisely at nine, in the blue undress uniform of a Field-Marshal, he would pass through Creedy's room and, seating himself at his desk, would plunge at once into the problems connected with the creation of his new armies or the

operations of the British forces scattered throughout the world. "France and Belgium fought for the most part on two fronts only, Austria on three, Italy practically on one, Germany on five, England carried on operations on seven, waged on three continents, carried on in different climates and topographies requiring different equipment and organization, whilst a watchful eye had to be kept on the North-West Frontier of India, the Western Front of Egypt, the hinterland of Aden, and other doubtful territories."¹²⁶

But the interminable Cabinet meetings bored and depressed him. To the minor members, although he could not always remember their names or their jobs, he was patient and polite, but in his opinion, with the exception of Asquith, the only man who never spoke unless he had something to say which was worth listening to, was Runciman, whom he spoke of as "a clever little devil". The truth of the matter was that he was in daily contact with a type he was unused to, who had different standards from his own, people who were skilled controversialists, whose stock-in-trade was the ability to talk, who lived by talking. Asquith said that Churchill and Lloyd George could only think when they talked. Kitchener, a slow thinker and not a controversialist, was at a disadvantage with them. Besides, he distrusted them. How could people who talked so much avoid disclosing information which they should have kept to themselves. Kitchener did not believe that they could and he sometimes declined to give them information they thought they ought to have. He was dismayed at hearing from women in society military facts which they should never have been

allowed to know.¹²⁷ Kitchener, therefore, kept at times certain information to himself. This was resented, but he was justified in doing so. Robertson, in a relevant passage in his "Soldiers and Statesmen", says:

"Copies of all communications which passed between the General Staff and the Commander-in-Chief were shown as a matter of course to the War Minister but they were not circulated to other Ministers. Lloyd George had not, therefore, seen them before coming to the War Office and knew little about the work that was being carried on. It was a revelation to him, the instructions regarding actual operations being especially attractive. When he became Prime Minister he gave directions that these instructions should continue to be sent to him—a practice for which there was no precedent as far as I am aware—and for good reasons. It unavoidably led to secret plans being seen by far too many people."

* * * * *

Occasionally, if he had an hour of leisure before the shops closed, Kitchener would prowl amongst them on the look-out for antiques for Broome. In his passion for seclusion he would not allow Collis, his chauffeur, to enlist, except for immediate service abroad, because, with a civilian chauffeur he was less likely to attract attention. Sundays would find him at Broome, where he went dressed in plain clothes. Sometimes FitzGerald went with him, sometimes Arthur. There is one who remembers him scated alone under one of the beeches in the park painstakingly and with guarded

movements feeding the pheasants which had come close to him. Sometimes he asked convalescent soldiers in the neighbourhood to take tea with him, when he was always friendly, easy and simple. His personal tastes were spartan. At Weston's cottage at Broome, and at York House, luggage was always kept ready packed in case of emergency.

The alterations at Broome were now nearing completion. In the house the Great Hall was finished. The two monumental fireplaces, copied from one at Hatfield, were in place, bearing his motto, "Thorough", carved above the black marble columns. The terraces were being paved and the lodge by the entrance gates was already under roof.

At intervals he went to Hatfield, where on one occasion, when the work at Broome was in its earlier stages, guests were surprised to see a strange individual using a tape-line and entering figures in a notebook. It was Surguy, Kitchener's valet, measuring the proportions of the rooms.

In spite of his iron self-control, in small ways Kitchener was nervous. He would never allow himself to be driven through the Admiralty Arch on his way to and from the War Office, because of an inequality in the roadway which caused his car to jolt slightly in going over it. He was impatient of mistakes and yet in his own way would try to make amends for his impatience. Arthur omitted something from a speech Kitchener was to make, which Kitchener particularly wanted to be included. Although the omission was discovered in time Kitchener was annoyed and showed it unmistakably, but later, coming into Arthur's room,

he said, without referring to the incident, "I thought perhaps you would like to hear about my last visit to France", and he proceeded to give an amusing and interesting account of a visit to the French Headquarters which he had lately made. Contrary to popular repute he had a keen sense of humour. He cared nothing for popularity either with the Army or the public; duty was his watchword and although he was not ungrateful for services well performed, he could be ruthless if people failed him.

* * * * *

At the beginning of 1915 the hard-pressed Russians appealed to their allies to relieve them by striking a blow somewhere in the Eastern theatre of the war. This gave Churchill an opportunity again to press the merits of an attempt to force the passage of the Dardanelles. A joint expedition was out of the question as Kitchener had no troops to spare. Churchill was sure that he could succeed without the aid of the army. Fisher was opposed to it. Admiral Sir Henry Jackson seems to have approved the attack on the outer forts but considered an attempt by the fleet alone a mad thing to do. However, toward the end of January the Cabinet decided to let Churchill try. Churchill met General Sir Archibald Murray in St. James's Park one afternoon and told him the decision. Murray said, "You will never silence the forts without howitzers".

The attempt was made and failed.

Long afterward it was learned that the attack came within an ace of succeeding—but it did not succeed. Kitchener was then called on for military aid, although

the express stipulation of the War Council, before consenting to the attempt, had been that it was to consist of a naval operation alone. Now, however, the War Council ordered the 29th Division and a contingent of troops from Egypt to proceed to the Dardanelles. Kitchener refused to consent, and he had good reasons for doing so. The Western Front could not be considered safe with the 29th Division at Gallipoli, whilst it was not known whether the Germans would continue to prosecute their campaign against Russia or turn again to Flanders, while it was still uncertain where they would send their new formations. It was not until the middle of January, 1915, that von Falkenhayn reluctantly decided to send his new formations to the East. "With a heavy heart", he tells us, "the Chief of the General Staff had made up his mind to employ in the East the young corps who were the only available military reserves at the time."¹³⁸ This decision meant further abandonment of any active campaign in the West for a long time". It was not until three weeks after the War Council's decision to send the 29th Division to Gallipoli that Kitchener, satisfied at last that the German formations were really to be employed on the Eastern Front, allowed the 29th Division to embark for the Dardanelles and the ghastly and long drawn out tragedy of Gallipoli began.

Kitchener, never forgetting his beloved Near East, would have preferred a landing at Alexandretta, and perhaps would have insisted on it had he known that the War Council would ultimately ask for troops for the Dardanelles. This would have assisted the Arabs in their revolt which finally took place a year later, removed

the menace of an invasion of Egypt, and threatened Constantinople itself. When the evacuation of Gallipoli was decided on, realising the blow to Allied prestige which would follow throughout the Eastern world, he again strongly advocated a landing at Alexandretta, but the French, who feared that their own aspirations in Syria might be prejudicially affected, opposed it for political reasons, and, finally, at a conference in Paris, the plan was definitely rejected. It was for political reasons, too, that the French, dragging the British in with them, had embarked on the Salonika enterprise. Since the beginning of the military conversations with Paris in 1905 the British Empire seemed to have become an appendage of the French Republic where foreign affairs were concerned.

* * * * *

Whilst the attempts to scale the heights of Gallipoli were under way, Sir John French and the Frenchmen were hammering the Germans and, as usual, killing three allies for every two enemy soldiers in the process. On March 10th the battle of Neuve Chappelle was begun, first reported by French as a victory. On April 14th French came to London to see Kitchener. When announcing his coming he had previously written :

“I don’t want the P.M. or Winston or anyone but you and the King to know I am in London. I will bring maps and copious notes and tell you everything, but I don’t want to have anything in writing. I am in strong hopes of a great advance.”¹²⁹

After seeing French, Kitchener wrote Asquith on the same day :

“ War Office,
Whitehall, S.W.

Secret.

My dear Prime Minister,

I have had a talk with French. He told me I could let you know that with the present supply of ammunition he will have as much as his troops will be able to use on the next forward movement.”¹³⁰

On April 19th the attack on Hill 60 took place. The beginning of the second battle of Ypres. This also was a failure but it was ushered in by optimistic reports from French which were later proved to be erroneous ; a day later Asquith made his celebrated Newcastle speech in which he stated, having in mind Kitchener's letter of the 14th, that there was no danger of an immediate shortage of ammunition at the Front. On May 2nd, still undeterred by his reverses, French wrote to Kitchener :

“ I was with Foch some time this morning and am now making arrangements for the *big* operation.”¹³¹

This was the action of Festubert, which resulted in the so-called munitions scandal, and which gave the plotters at home and at the Front grounds for believing that they would now be able to accomplish Kitchener's definite eclipse.

XV

FESTUBERT. THE MUNITIONS SCANDAL. HIGH
EXPLOSIVE SHELLS. THE FIRST COALITION. THE
MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS.

ON January 8th, 1915, Churchill wrote to French :

“ Your memorandum was circulated to the Cabinet and the War Council. Kitchener also read to the War Council this morning the correspondence you have just sent me. No one could say he did not place us fairly in possession of your views. . . . He also read a letter from you, written a few days before your memorandum, about artillery ammunition, and proved, I thought, successfully that it was physically impossible to satisfy these requirements. . . . I am bound to say that I do not think anyone could complain of the way in which Kitchener stated your position, though the differences of views were apparent.”¹³³

Kitchener believed, and his belief never wavered, that the prodigal expenditure of ammunition never, from the beginning, attained its object and that the results were negligible when compared with the terrific outlay of life and money, and this was bound up with a conviction that the conceptions of Sir John French

and the French generals as to the general conduct of the war were fundamentally unsound.

The memorandum of French's mentioned by Churchill advocated an advance on Zeebrugge and also complained of the shortage of ammunition, and in Kitchener's answer, written the next day, one finds the following paragraphs :

" It is impossible at the present time to maintain a sufficient supply of gun ammunition on the scale which you consider necessary for offensive operations. Every effort is being made in all parts of the world to obtain an unlimited supply of ammunition, but as you are well aware the result is still far from being sufficient to maintain the large number of guns which you now have under your command adequately supplied with ammunition for offensive operations. You have pointed out that offensive operations under the new conditions created by this war require a vast expenditure of artillery ammunition which may, even for ten or twenty days, necessitate the supply of 50 or 100 rounds per gun per day being available, and unless a reserve can be accumulated to meet an expenditure of this sort it is unwise in embarking on extensive operations against the enemy's trenches. It is, of course, almost impossible to calculate with any accuracy how long offensive operations once undertaken may last before the object is attained, but it is evident that the breaking off of such operations before accomplishment owing to the want of artillery ammunition and not on account of a successful termination or a convenient pause in the operations

being reached, might lead to a serious reverse being sustained by our forces.”¹³³

This warning, written four months before, describes precisely what took place at the battle of Festubert. French had ignored Kitchener's advice and had again failed.

French's optimistic reports on Festubert, subsequently learned to be inaccurate, aroused public indignation in England. Realizing that something must be done to bolster up his waning reputation and divert attention from his own failures, we have now the spectacle of the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in France launching a campaign against the Prime Minister and his own immediate superior, the Secretary of State for War, through politicians and a Press who were hostile to them. French's contention is that he was justified in doing so, but from the beginning he seemed to have realized and to have resented Kitchener's immensely greater ability, and some pressure of personal animosity seemed to have played a part in his plans. The recollection of his return to the front from the Embassy at Paris, after the retreat from Mons, chastened and subdued by pressure of a more powerful will and the realization that in almost every instance where there had been a difference of opinion between himself and Kitchener, Kitchener had been right and he wrong, seemed to have been a source of constant irritation. Now, if his intrigue was successful, his own reputation re-established and Kitchener replaced, he would be well content. If in his downfall Kitchener dragged Asquith with him—well that would be Asquith's affair, not his.

Repington, therefore, visited French at General Headquarters as his private guest and was supplied with material for inaugurating a Press campaign. French also sent Captain Guest, his A.D.C., to London to interview Mr. Lloyd George and certain of the opposition politicians. On May 14th Repington's famous article appeared in *The Times* in which he stated that "the want of an unlimited supply of ammunition was a fatal bar to success."

The article created an immense sensation. Asquith's Newcastle speech was recalled. In this speech he had apparently made a deliberate mis-statement of his own volition or had been misled. If he had been misled, and obviously French could not have misled him, then the War Office must be held responsible. He was asked point blank in the House of Commons whether or not Lord Kitchener had given him the assurance on which he had based his statement. Asquith refused to answer. This refusal was tantamount to an admission, and violent attacks followed in the Press against Kitchener and the War Office, *The Times* asserting that "Men died in heaps upon the Aubers Ridge ten days ago because the field-guns were short, and gravely short, of high explosive shells".

During the storm of excitement and vituperation which followed Kitchener remained calm and unruffled. He said nothing except that: "I am here to fight the Germans, not Sir John French". He forbade the newspapers friendly to the Government to take part in the controversy and told the King that he hoped that nothing would be done or said which would impair French's prestige as Commander-in-Chief of

the British forces in France. But in his possession was a document which would have confounded his enemies.

As has already been quoted he had written to French : "It is impossible at the present time to maintain a sufficient supply of gun ammunition on the scale which you consider necessary for offensive operations", and had warned him against embarking on such operations unless he was certain that he had sufficient reserves of ammunition to see him through. After Kitchener's death Sir George Arthur found amongst Kitchener's papers the letter from French to Kitchener already quoted, written a week before Festubert, in which he says :

"I was with Foch some time this morning and am now making arrangements for the *big* operation."

The letter ended with the pregnant sentence : "The ammunition will be all right".

These six words would have proved French's responsibility for the losses at Festubert but Kitchener disdained to make use of them.

* * * * *

Lloyd George, apparently quick to see that more kudos might result from agitating the munitions question than the question of drink, now forgot the latter and sent to the Prime Minister a stinging memorandum, the fruit of Sir John French's allegations and his own insufficient knowledge on the subject, calling attention

to the shortcomings of the War Office. At the same time the relations between Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Fisher, First Sea Lord, which had been frayed to breaking point over the Dardanelles enterprise and other matters, resulted in Fisher's resignation. A crisis followed, the opposition politicians, with two such opportunities for making trouble, looking forward with satisfaction to the difficult time they proposed to give the Government in the House of Commons. Asquith, however, forestalled them by inviting them to assist in the formation of a new Government. The first Coalition Ministry was the result. Churchill stated later that the new Cabinet as a machine for prosecuting the war was even more unsatisfactory than the previous one.

Of the members of the former Cabinet only three retained their posts, Asquith, Kitchener and Grey. Churchill was forced out of the Admiralty and Lloyd George was given, as he had expected, the new Ministry of Munitions. Mr. Churchill states in "The World Crisis" that with one exception Kitchener, the "overburdened Titan", was the only one of his colleagues to pay him a visit of ceremony on his departure from The Admiralty. It was hoped by those anxious to see him supplanted that Kitchener would be got rid of too, but he was too strong. French's intrigue had hopelessly misfired and popular resentment against the newspaper attacks was so great that they had been promptly discontinued. The *Daily Mail* was burnt on the floor of the Stock Exchange. Kitchener was surprised at this and thought the action rather nonsensical. He was surprised, too, a month later when looking out of

one of the windows of his room at the War Office to see Whitehall packed with people.¹⁸⁴

"What are they doing there?" he asked.

He did not know that the British public with its instinctive accuracy in estimating the merits of its leaders was waiting to cheer him, and on that July afternoon when he drove to the Guildhall to make his speech appealing for more recruits, even he, sitting stern and immobile without one gesture of acknowledgement, must have been stirred by the warmth of the demonstrations from the immense crowds waiting to greet him.

* * * * *

The tragic failure of the Festubert offensive was due to the fact that French embarked on it with insufficient ammunition, in spite of Kitchener's warning. French alleged that it was due to a shortage of high explosive shell for which he had repeatedly asked the War Office. Actually, the suggestion that high explosive might be required first came from the War Office and not from Sir John French. Before the war was a week old the Master-General of Ordnance, Von Donop, asked the High Command in France whether some high explosive shell would not be welcome for the horse and field artillery. The reply received to this enquiry was :

"This is really a big question. Consensus of opinion among gunners seems to be that the high explosive from the German field-guns is terrible in its moral effect but that the actual result is not very



LORD KITCHENER MAKING A RECRUITING SPEECH, 1915

great . . . as an advance opinion I should say that if you have safe explosive for field-guns by all means proceed to manufacture. Our gunners would like to be in possession of it and I suppose money is but little object, and it will take considerable time to supply it, will it not ? ”¹⁹⁵

As this was stated to be an advance opinion the War Office wrote again and on September 7th, 1914, received an answer that the matter had not yet been submitted to the Commander-in-Chief but that the Chief of Staff thought that “ high explosive might be welcome in the long run ”. A rider was added that there was not quite enough data to go upon, though the “ moral effect of the stuff is no doubt high, the actual effect does not seem to come up to statements ”. A week later a telegram was received stating that the subject had been brought before the Commander-in-Chief who concurred in the request that the War Office should supply it as soon as possible. The first demand for high explosive for the field artillery was that it was to replace shrapnel to the extent of fifty per cent. ; later this proportion was reduced and twenty-five per cent. of high explosive was asked for, experience having proved that for all-round effectiveness shrapnel was the superior of the two.

High explosive shells had for many years constituted the major part of the equipment of all British artillery except for light field-guns and it had been left out of their equipment after extensive trials during the time that Sir John French held the post of Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the War Office. The fuse for

shells suitable for light field-guns presented difficulties which had never as yet been satisfactorily solved. The problem was to devise a fuse which would not explode prematurely, which would effectively fragment the shell, and which would act when the shell instead of striking full on the nose merely grazed the ground. Efforts to overcome these difficulties were being made at Woolwich. In September the French General Deville came to London with a sample of a new *soixante-quinze* shell and fuse which the French recommended for British adoption with certain modifications. The Master-General of Ordnance, Sir Stanley Von Donop, declined to approve it as he considered it to be unsafe. Nevertheless, Kitchener ordered a thousand rounds to be sent over and tests were made. The Ordnance Board's decision supported Von Donop and, four months later, a contemplated offensive of Joffre's had to be postponed because of the bursting of eight hundred guns in which this shell was used. In the meantime an emergency fuse had been devised at Woolwich and found satisfactory ; an output of two thousand rounds a week was reached but, owing to its complicated nature, it took too long to manufacture. Soon after, the problem which for a number of years had seemed insoluble, was solved by a happy inspiration and in July, 1915, the first completed rounds of the one hundred and thirteen millions afterwards made were sent to the front.¹³⁶

* * * * *

The Munitions shortage in its broader aspects was also inevitable. The War Office, over-worked, short-

handed, totally unprepared, unassisted by the legislation which came later, toiled night and day. There was no secret about its difficulties. On March 15th, 1915, two months before French launched his attempt to discredit the Secretary of State for War and before Lloyd George's attack on him, Kitchener in a speech in the House of Lords, gave public expression to his anxiety regarding munitions.

On March 24th, 1915, Asquith writes :

"K. talked at length about the proposed new War Supplies Committee of Lloyd George, Montagu and company. He is naturally rather suspicious of its intruding into his own domain and upsetting some of his plans and arrangements. On the whole he spoke very fairly and temperately and tomorrow morning I hope to get a *modus vivendi* between him and Lloyd George."

Until production caught up with expenditure there must be a shortage and before this could be accomplished a multitude of various activities must be got under way ; experiments often of an extremely technical complicated and prolonged nature had to be carried out ; intricate machinery made ; factories built or found in which to make it ; existing plants enlarged ; chemicals and metals procured ; labour provided and innumerable inventions and devices tested and perfected. England was not the only country where an ambitious politician of the dynamic variety might have made political capital out of the shortage of munitions. France and Germany offered similar opportunities. In November, 1915,

Robertson in a letter to Asquith speaks of the exhaustion of the French ammunition supply. Early in 1915, Germany herself was desperately hard up. "The French, though they had not to supply an army greatly increased by the improvisation of new divisions, had much the same difficulties as ourselves. The causes of their difficulties, somewhat different from ours, were the general mobilization for duty in the field of masters, managers and workmen regardless of their highly skilled services being required for the manufacture of munitions, the lack of raw material in iron and coal due to the loss of the Briey Basin and complete want of preparation for the expansion of factories.

As regards guns and general war material the Germans never had any serious difficulties for they entered the war well equipped, but as regards ammunition they were not so well prepared. General von Falkenhayn, the Chief of the German General Staff, has written :

"By mid-September, 1914, the spectre of the shortage of ammunition was already apparent. Consumption exceeded peace-time estimates many times over! Only those who held responsible positions in the Supreme Command during the winter of 1914-15 can form any estimate of the difficulties that had to be overcome. Almost every shot had to be counted and the failure of a single ammunition train, or any slight accident, threatened to render whole sections of the front defenceless."¹³

"Not only did Kitchener not fail to realize the importance of increasing the output of munitions but

he achieved much in this respect of which the credit has been assigned to, or filched by, others. The unexpected enormous demand for munitions foreseen by nobody, not even by the systematically prepared Germany, could not be met by a stroke of the pen. There were no Krupp works in England. It must be a matter of many months, and if blame is to be cast on anyone for the shortage of 1914-15 it should be attributed to those ministers and their military advisers who had office before the war."¹²⁸

By the spring of 1915 the orders placed by the War Office in the United Kingdom, either by direct contract or by sub-contract through the armament firms had involved between two thousand five hundred and three thousand manufacturers in the production of munitions and enormous orders had been placed in various parts of the world, but the remedy for one serious difficulty, the shortage of labour, "which had already been applied in France and Germany, namely the dilution of skilled labour by unskilled and the employment of women, was practically impossible owing to the restrictions imposed by the trades union rules". In October, 1914, Von Donop, the Master-General of Ordnance, had an interview with Asquith at which Haldane and Lloyd George were present, when he explained the difficulties being encountered in the production of munitions owing to trade union restrictions, which only cabinet action could remove. No action was taken until the Ministry of Munitions was set up.

The Ministry of Munitions, inheriting all the previous work of the War Office, came into existence in May,

1915, but it was not until nearly a year later that one round made completely under the new dispensation was delivered at the front and, during that time, the armies in France fought with ammunition supplied by the War Office. The Ministry of Munitions was created to make good the alleged shortcomings of the War Office; its activities were prodigious and it accomplished great things from certain points of view, but, as too much praise is to be deprecated as much as too little, and, as it seems to have received at the hands of its various heads a good deal of the former and very little of the latter, a short examination of the debit side may perhaps be excused.

Major-General Sir A. Forbes in his "History of the Army Ordnance Services" says (and his statements are corroborated by Sir John Cowans in the "Statistics of the Military effort of the British Empire during the Great War"):

"Under the original agreement the Ministry [of Munitions] engaged to hand over ammunition in complete rounds, but it failed to do so, with the result that the Army had to take over components and arrange for their assembly. Ordnance officers were posted at each factory to take charge of what was manufactured and the administrative charge of these new Ordnance depots was first vested in the D.D.O.S. at Woolwich. With the removal of the supervising staff to London in October, 1917, the office of A.D.O.S. Ammunition became a direct branch of the War Office. . . . Its duties embraced the receipt, storage

and issue of all ammunition produced at the National factories or elsewhere and it worked under the D.E.O.S. though also in close touch with the Director of Artillery who dealt with demands from overseas and gave instructions as to what quantities were to be issued. Eventually there were twenty-six factories where stocks of ammunition were thus held, besides the peace magazines Portsmouth, Plymouth, etc., but, even so, accommodation proved insufficient. Large central depots were created at Bramley, Altrincham, Credenhill and Didcot, with smaller ones elsewhere, the total accommodation in Ordnance charge eventually having a capacity of a million tons. All these establishments with their staff and laboratories were administered by the A.D.O.S. Ammunition. Shell were called from one factory, cartridges from another, tubes and fuses from elsewhere and the completed rounds linked up by the Ordnance staff at the port of embarkation where a stock of components were kept to make good any shortage."

The difference between promise and performance in the delivery of munitions was not done away with by the creation of the new Ministry and there was a noticeable deterioration in their quality. It may be well to quote some relevant passages from "The Official History of the War":

"The quantities considered necessary for the opening of the Somme battle were more or less provided. The rounds per piece for field-guns and

field howitzers being slightly in excess of scale, but those for all the heavier natures fell from 13 to 2 rounds below the estimate except as regards the old 4.7 inch gun for which the figure was 67 per gun below and the 6 inch howitzer [26 cwt.] 180. For the 6 inch howitzer [30 cwt.] the shortage was only two rounds per piece. Unfortunately ammunition could be fired quicker than it could be replaced, the expenditure at the Somme in one month from the 24th June, the beginning of the bombardment, to the 23rd July, amounted to 148,000 tons [ten million pounds a day], and during the same period the quantity landed in France was only 101,771 tons. Had the quality of the ammunition been good, the quantity might have sufficed, but at some time or other during 1916 many types of munitions were under suspicion, or under examination for some flaw, or under repair or reconditioning for some ascertained defect; indeed, there is general agreement that the quality both of guns and ammunition was much below that of those used at the Battle of Loos. [Fought with munitions supplied under the War Office regime.] Thus, throughout 1916 there was a steady increase in the number of prematures in proportion to the number of rounds. . . . The bursting of two 9.2 howitzers . . . and other large guns owing to prematures was traced to defective shells. . . . The fuse of the 8 in. howitzers so frequently failed to ignite the bursting charge that the Somme battlefield in parts was littered with blind shell now better known as 'duds.' . . . There were also many blinds from the deterioration of the explo-

sive. Furthermore, prematures occurred in all natures of heavy guns from defective fuses, and a large number of misfires, as a result of the poor quality of the firing tubes. The 60 pounders averaged two prematures per thousand rounds owing to the shrapnel heads becoming detached in the bore. The 4.5 inch howitzer ammunition developed both explosions in the bore and prematures four or five yards from the muzzle and the batteries formed of them were for a time known as suicide clubs. . . . Owing to mass manufacture and the desire to report a high output, the provision of spare parts not only for 18 pounders but for every other kind of weapon, vehicle and store, had been neglected. . . . In exchange for a gun whose bore was worn by firing all that could be offered was a relined piece, and relined with such soft metal that the old piece was often retained as more serviceable. To give a few instances of other defects . . . the high explosive in heavy shell was liable to exude in summer, forming a dangerous film which required care and skill to remove, the contents of flares were liable to decomposition, phosphorous bombs were prone to spontaneous combustion. For one, fuse fittings had to be inserted, as owing to too much play it gave prematures, in others the time pellet had to be removed and subsequently replaced, the firing mechanism of the heavy trench-mortars went wrong . . . after the first few rounds, Stokes mortar ammunition gave much trouble . . . large quantities of Mills grenades proved defective and there were many accidents . . . rifle grenades had defects which caused either prematures or duds.

“When, after the beginning of the Battles of the Somme the wholesale and terrible defects of guns, ammunition and fuses were reported, the Minister of Munitions said: ‘The Garrison Artillery in France is entirely untrained, it cannot shoot, and is quite unfitted to work the perfect weapons which I have provided’. Gen. Rawlinson, when asked to express his opinion on this charge, at once repudiated it, for he, the Ordnance officers at the depots, and the troops at the Front were only too well aware where the fault lay.”

“The Official History of the War”, however, generously adds to this account :

“But against the defects of munitions in 1916 due to hurried design, improvisation of plant and workers on a huge scale, and unskilled inspection, must be set the enormous output, greater in proportion to the pre-war demands than the size of the New to the Old Army.”

Sir Douglas Haig has written : “It was not until midsummer, 1916, that the artillery situation became even approximately adequate to the conduct of major operations.”¹³⁹

The Ministry of Munitions had immediately got under way to make these major operations possible. Gigantic factories were built, acres of floor space commandeered, regiments of secretaries and typists

appointed, companies of the apostles of big business recruited, working behind magnificent office desks of the newest variety (unobtrusively assisted by technical experts from the War Office) and hundreds of thousands of the industrial population employed. Fortified by this array of physical and mental talent and armed with unlimited powers, the Ministry of Munitions, spending money with a prodigious prodigality which staggers the imagination, began to pour across the Channel torrents of ammunition, good and bad, and the major operations under Haig began. This was after Kitchener's death. Lloyd George was now Secretary of State for War, Robertson, who was still Chief of Staff, favoured offensive operations on the Western Front because he could think of nothing better and Kitchener's restraining hand was absent.

"The terrific artillery pulverized the ground, smashing simultaneously the German trenches and the ordinary drainage. By sublime devotion and frightful losses small indentations were made upon the German front. In six weeks at the farthest point we had advanced four miles. Soon the rain descended, and the vast crater fields became a sea of choking fetid mud in which men, animals and tanks floundered and perished hopelessly. . . ." ¹⁴⁰ A high staff officer from General Headquarters wept on first seeing this ghastly cesspool. "These violent sustained thrusts shook the enemy to their foundations, but the German losses were always on a far smaller scale. They always had far fewer troops in the cauldron. They always took nearly two lives for one and sold every inch of ground with extortion." ¹⁴¹

From July to November, 1916, the British Armies with a strength of a million and a half, equipped with immense supplies of ammunition, lost a third of its numbers. From March to July, 1915, when it was claimed that the British offensives were unsuccessful because of the shortage of ammunition, the losses were one-fifth.¹⁴² It would seem therefore that the Ministry of Munitions had proved not to be an unmixed blessing.

The Cabinet became uneasy at the doubtful results being achieved by this combined High Command—General Staff—Ministry of Munitions offensive, and French's opinion was asked. French after his supersession by Haig had been placed in command of the Home Army. French now recommended the defensive tactics advocated by Kitchener when French was Commander-in-Chief but the Cabinet was either too timid or too divided to interfere. The illusions formerly cherished by French and combated by Kitchener still persisted in the High Command which, more completely equipped by the frenzied activities of the Ministry of Munitions than ever before, was now testing them on a more gigantic scale, with proportionately greater losses.

"August passed away, October was far spent. The full severity of a Flanders winter gripped the ghastly battlefield. . . . Fast as the cannon fired, the ammunition flowed in faster. Even in October the British staff were planning and launching offensives and were confident of reaching the goal of decisive results. It was not until November that final failure was accepted."¹⁴³

This combination of talents, the High Command, the General Staff and the Ministry of Munitions had worn down alike the "manhood and the guns of the British Army almost to destruction".¹⁴⁴

XVI

KITCHENER AND ROBERTSON. THE INVITATION
FROM THE CZAR. THE DEBATE ON LORD
KITCHENER'S SALARY. THE LAST VISIT TO BROOME.

IN November the Government decided to send Kitchener to Gallipoli to report at first hand on the situation there, and to determine whether or not evacuation was advisable. But before leaving he had a talk with Robertson.

Sir Charles Douglas, who had followed Sir John French as Chief of the General Staff when the latter had resigned during the Irish troubles, was in failing health at the time and had died in October, 1914. He was succeeded by Sir James Woolf Murray who, coming from South Africa, was not in touch with the situation. The dearth of senior officers allowed little choice in making this appointment, and Kitchener had been obliged to take upon his shoulders work which should have been done by others. The burden which Kitchener carried was, therefore, a tremendous one and for some time he had had a man in mind as Chief of Staff who, he felt sure, would relieve him of some of his arduous duties. This was Sir William Robertson, a shrewd, competent, unimaginative officer with an immense capacity for work. Kitchener had not taken him before because he was always loth to deprive French of

people of ability. At the beginning, when there was a desperate need of officers to be used in training the new armies, Kitchener would go over the lists again and again, saying from time to time, "No, we mustn't take *him* away from French".

But toward the end of September, after the disastrous failure at Loos, it became evident that French must go, and Haig was chosen to succeed him. This meant a new Commander-in-Chief and a general reshuffle of Staff appointments. Robertson happened to be in London and Kitchener sent for him to come to York House. Kitchener offered him the post but Robertson declined it. Hardly knowing Kitchener and influenced by gossip at the Front "that Lord Kitchener centralized all authority in his own hands and would not allow the General Staff at the War Office to take part in the strategical direction of operations",¹⁴⁵ he told Kitchener that he would prefer not to undertake it and asked to be allowed to remain in France. Kitchener would not consent. A long conversation followed, during which Kitchener referred to the legends which had grown up as to his supposedly domineering methods. Robertson, impressed by Kitchener's frankness, agreed to come to the War Office, but suggested that he should draw up a memorandum incorporating his views as to what the relations between the Secretary of State for War and the Chief of Staff should be. Kitchener acquiesced and Robertson returned to France. The memorandum he sent to Kitchener a few days later did not meet with the latter's approval and he wrote to Robertson to that effect. At that moment Kitchener was about to start for Gallipoli, stopping at Paris on the way. Robertson,

who knew that he was coming and who was at St. Omer, twenty-five miles away, drove to Calais to meet him. It was after dinner and the early darkness of a November night had long since closed in. Kitchener's train was just starting and Robertson was asked to go with him to Paris and discuss Robertson's memorandum on the way. They talked until two in the morning and at Paris, after breakfast, they began again. The offending paragraphs, which Robertson says were written in a hurry and not very happily worded, were amended in a manner satisfactory to both and it was finally agreed that Robertson was to be installed at the War Office as Chief of the Imperial General Staff on Kitchener's return from Gallipoli.

Statements that Kitchener was superseded by Robertson are completely erroneous. The latter took over certain clearly defined functions within which the Secretary of State for War agreed to leave him comparatively free, but the supreme control remained in Kitchener's hands until the day of his death.

In his "Soldiers and Statesmen" Robertson writes :

"When, in June, 1916, Lloyd George became War Minister the system set up at the end of 1915 appeared to be not so satisfactory to him as it had been to his predecessor. He seemed to be particularly suspicious of the Order in Council, which he apparently thought had unduly increased the powers of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the expense of his own. In reality it did not. It merely intrusted a certain duty, the issue of operation orders to one department of

the War Office (which was no less subordinate to the War Minister than any of the others) instead of pretending to assign it to the Army Council as a body."

Of his personal relations with Kitchener he writes :

" During the time we were together Lord Kitchener would sometimes refer to the memorandum as ' our bargain ' (a bargain which, by the way, Robertson said later he never would have asked for if he had not been misled as to Kitchener's character) and would ask his personal staff whether he was carrying his part of it out, thus showing a genuine desire to make everything go smoothly. For myself I never had occasion to give it another thought, and I shall always regret that the unfounded gossip to which I have alluded caused me to misjudge him, even though temporarily, and so add to the cares and anxieties he was carrying alone and unaided save by those loyal friends who really knew and appreciated him."

* * * * *

At the end of November Kitchener was once more in London. The evacuation of Gallipoli had been decided on. This was one of the most distressing periods of Kitchener's life. He suffered acutely whilst waiting for news, saying to the Prime Minister, " I walk my room at night and see our boats capsizing and our men drowning under the Turkish fire ". Grey writes :

" When at length the decision to abandon Gallipoli had to be taken, Kitchener was the most tragic

figure of us all. He, like the rest of us, anticipated that the withdrawal of troops could not be accomplished without catastrophe. The first part would get safely away but the last detachment would not. 'Distress' would not be the right word to apply to Kitchener in these dark days at the end. Distress suggests a breakdown and this was never true of him. But he felt his responsibility intensely."

Kitchener was at Broome when the telegram was handed to him announcing Birdwood's complete success in carrying out the critical manœuvres attending the evacuation, and for a moment emotion so overcame him that he could not speak.¹⁴⁰

* * * *

Across the Eastern Hemisphere and the adjacent seas the war went on. In Paris in the winter of 1915 Robertson had said to General Sir Alfred Knox that it would be ended only by the higher rulers getting sick of it, and so it seemed. In February, 1916, the Battle of Verdun had begun. In May a great Austro-Hungarian offensive was inaugurated against Italy, the inconclusive struggle continued on the Western Front, Smuts was succeeding in German East Africa, but Kut-el-Amara had fallen and Townshend had surrendered. The rebellion in Ireland had broken out, to be suppressed after six days of bloody fighting in the streets of Dublin. From the Channel to the Mediterranean, through Asia Minor and through Africa, in the desert and in the humid heat of tropical forests, the war was taking its daily and hourly toll of human



Imperial War Museum

LORD KITCHENER AND GENERAL BIRDWOOD

At Anzac 13th November, 1915, returning through the trenches to the beach

life. In Europe the armies toiled unceasingly through scenes of desolation and ruin, sinister and gloomy processions passing under sombre skies through devastated lands, or lay rotting in the trenches. At night the red glare of conflagrations lit the heavens or the cold radiance of the star-shells flooded with silver the stiffened shapes of the dead and the fetid and bloody earth. The air shuddered with the thunder of heavy ordnance, the whine and shriek of projectiles, the rattle of machine-guns, the bursting of shells, and the ground shook with the rumble of artillery. The war was becoming more cruel, more vindictive, more ferocious, less bound by the conventions of civilized warfare—if such a term may be used. Bombs were dropped on defenceless cities, neutral vessels were sunk, aeroplanes attacked red-cross hospitals and hospital ships, choking and searing gases were being used, and plague and famine were destroying tens of thousands of the civilian populations. The tragi-comedy of human existence was now all tragedy. By land and sea the unremitting struggle still went on across a tortured world, until nature itself seemed coloured by it, seemed to speak of it in all its varied phases, in the sun shining without brightness, in the sombre darkness and dejection of the cloudy days of autumn, in the sad imperceptible approach of evening, and in the vast hush of night. To some it seemed as if a pall were covering the sky, made up, perhaps, of all the clustering flying myriads of broken hopes, of shattered loves, of agonies endured, of the tortures of suspense, of the pains of parting, of all the tears, sighs and sorrows wrung by this war from the souls of men and

women, hovering above the dark earth whence they had arisen.

* * * * *

Early in May the Czar's invitation to Kitchener to visit Russia arrived. Amongst the Allies the Russian situation was causing uneasiness. Kitchener accepted. In the meantime his enemies were still busy. Robertson had not been at the War Office a week before he was told that "they" hoped that he would down Lord Kitchener. Robertson replied that he had no intention of downing anybody, least of all the Secretary of State for War.¹⁴⁷ A week after the receipt of the Czar's invitation Churchill attacked the administration of the War Office, in the House of Commons. On May 26th, *The Times* announced that "an important debate is promised in the House of Commons next week on Lord Kitchener's salary as Secretary of State for War. The Liberal War Committee will lead the attack, and Sir Ivor Herbert, Mr. Ellis Griffiths and Sir A. Markham will probably take part in the debate". On May 29th the debate was again referred to: "On Wednesday a lively debate is expected on the vote for Lord Kitchener's salary. Several critics of Lord Kitchener's administration intend to avail themselves of a long-sought opportunity"; and on May 31st: "The debate on Lord Kitchener's salary in the House of Commons this afternoon is awaited with lively curiosity". On June 1st, *The Times* devoted nearly four columns to a report of the proceedings of the day before. Churchill, the principal speaker, returned to the attack he had made the previous week, charging the War Office with a wasteful employ-

ment of man-power—a charge which later was completely refuted. Other speeches were made attacking Lord Kitchener's administration, and General Sir Ivor Herbert moved the reduction of his salary. At the conclusion of the debate a vote of confidence was carried by an imposing majority but, in spite of this, Mr. Tennant, on behalf of Lord Kitchener, made the unusual announcement that the Secretary of State for War would be glad to meet members of the House of Commons at the War Office on Friday morning. Mr. Tennant suggested that those members who wished to be present should give their names to the Whips. If the number was too great to be accommodated at the War Office, a room in the Foreign Office would be made use of. Someone asked :

“ Shall we be allowed to question Lord Kitchener ? ”

Mr. Tennant answered, “ Yes ”, and Sir A. Markham exclaimed :

“ We shall all be there.”

Later it was found that the attendance would be so large that another place must be found, and the meeting was held in Committee Room 14 in the House of Commons. People who were present at this meeting say that Kitchener made a profound impression, and a vote of thanks, proposed by the Rt. Hon. W. Crooks and seconded by Sir Ivor Herbert, who two days before had moved the reduction of his salary, was passed unanimously.

The popular belief is that during the final phase of Kitchener's life the clouds were closing down on him. On the contrary, they were lifting. Asquith wrote that the last week of Kitchener's life was the happiest he

had spent since the beginning of the war, but happiness at this tragic time could have been at its greatest no more than relative. "It began with the auspicious news of the great sea battle of Jutland. . . . On June 2nd, at his own suggestion, he attended a large private meeting of members of Parliament, addressed to them a memorable speech in vindication of his administration and submitted himself to cross-examination. He completely carried his audience with him and the meeting ended with a unanimous resolution of gratitude and admiration. On the evening of the same day he came to see me to say good-bye. He was in the highest spirits and described with gusto and humour some of his friendly passages with his hecklers at the House. He left the room gay, alert, elastic, sanguine."¹⁴⁸

From the House of Commons he returned to the War Office. It was now Friday afternoon, the second of June, 1916, and Kitchener had three more days to live. These were his last hours at the War Office before his departure for Russia and there were still many matters to be attended to. He instructed Robertson that if von Donop, the Master General of Ordnance, was attacked by the politicians during his absence, he must be protected from their persecutions. In Arthur's room, next his own, he telephoned to his solicitors on a private matter. He had heard that a Canadian Company in which he had a few shares had received a contract for making munitions. He told them that these shares must be sold at once. At Downing Street he called on the Prime Minister to say good-bye. Later the King received him at the Palace to talk to him about his Russian journey, and in the morning he and FitzGerald



Country Life

THE LARGE DRAWING-ROOM AT BROOME

Added by James Wyatt in 1778

motored to Broome. He was to have twenty-four hours' rest there and on Sunday afternoon they would journey back to London in time to take the special train for Thurso.

Kitchener always looked forward to those hours at Broome ; there were things to be done there, decisions to be made, which took his thoughts away from the eternal problems of the War. Now there would be questions to settle with reference to the arrangement of the bedroom floors ; the Chinese screens of Coromandel wood, with which he was having the walls of one of the smaller drawing-rooms lined, must be in place and he was anxious to see the effect ; he must manage to arrange at least some of his porcelains in the cabinets waiting for them ; in the rose garden which FitzGerald had laid out, the roses sent him by Alfred Rothschild from Tring must be in bloom ; and perhaps he would find the small garden statues executed by the Countess Gleichen standing at the intersection of the paths in the positions he had allotted to them. He had a feeling of content such as he had not known since he had left Egypt two years before. Broome was nearing completion ; the last divisions of his armies were ready for the field ; in two years he had transformed England into a great military power ; with Robertson's able assistance his work at the War Office had become less burdensome ; and on the day before he had routed his enemies.

As Kitchener and FitzGerald sped on through the Kentish countryside, sitting silent as they often did, many other thoughts, too, must have been crowding through his brain. Perhaps he was thinking of a letter

he had lately received from Egypt. Hearing of the persistent intrigues against him, a soldier friend of many years standing had written to him recalling the plans and hopes of those early days when Kitchener had dreamed of a Viceroyalty of the Near East. His friend had written urging him to give up his post at the War Office, leave the atmosphere of political chicanery which surrounded him, return to Egypt, gather together in his own hands all the military enterprises in that part of the world, and with the opportunities offered by the confusion and upheaval of war and his prestige among the Eastern populations, realize, perhaps, his earlier ambitions.

But Kitchener had other aims now. It was inevitable that sooner or later the forces of the Allies would be placed under one supreme command. Except for the few who were jealous of his commanding position or whose ambitions his own career had frustrated and who, by unrelenting industry in their efforts to discredit him, were attempting to counterbalance their lack of numbers, his world-wide reputation, towering immeasurably above all others, remained unimpaired, his prestige untarnished, and when the time came that post would be his. Later, a greater task would present itself, that of the fabrication of peace. This would be the gravest problem of all and its successful solution the greatest victory. His wish to help there was stronger than any other, for it was of vital importance that the peace should be a just one. There must be no vindictiveness, no revengeful oppressions, which would keep hatreds alive and lead to other catastrophes. If this was not seen to, if the victors wrested from the

vanquished conditions which would make future horrors certain, then the world would be burdened with armies as before, the race for armaments would begin again, cannon would be forged in greater numbers, the docks of the shipyards would be crowded with the bulks of building battleships, aeroplanes would become more swift and menacing, human ingenuity would devise engines of destruction still more deadly, governments would begin again their ancient games of secret intrigue and deceit, and all those shattered millions lying in their blood-drenched graves, torn from life at the bidding of their masters, would have died in vain.

Perhaps thoughts such as these were passing through Kitchener's mind as he drove eastward through the Kentish countryside for the last time, for on the stone panel above the fireplace of one of the great rooms at Broome he had had these words carved :

BEATI PACIFICI

(Blessed are the Peacemakers)

XVII

EPILOGUE

THE *Hampshire* left her anchorage at quarter to five on the afternoon of June 6th, 1916. Because of the storm from the north-east it had been decided at the last moment to send her to the west of the Orkneys so that she would have the advantage of their shelter, but, after passing Tor Ness, the gale shifted to the north and then to the north-west, blowing with such violence that soon after six the two destroyers who were escorting her signalled that they could not keep up with her, although she had reduced her speed to fifteen knots. The *Hampshire* ordered them to return to their base and went on alone. Mountainous seas were breaking over her, all her hatches except one had been battened down and her speed had again been reduced.

Between the Brough of Birsay and Marwick Head, a mile and a half from the desolate and rocky coast but in deep water, the explosion came. A cloud of smoke arose and the fumes of cordite spread through the ship, which began to settle at once. The electric power failed. She was unable to steer. The lights went out. No wireless communication was possible. The centre part of the hull seemed to have been torn completely away. The *Hampshire*, striking either a fixed or a floating mine, had received a mortal wound.

The survivors, twelve in number, who reached the shore clinging to one of the ship's floats after incredible hardships, testified that there was no confusion. The clear, mournful call of the bugles, to be heard by Kitchener for the last time, rose above the fury of the storm, sounding orders to abandon ship. Efforts were made to launch the boats but they were battered to pieces. There was nothing to be done. No human power could save them from those raging, icy seas. Already lurching and staggering, the *Hampshire* was sinking slowly at the bows. In five minutes, ten minutes, it would be over; it was time to go, and Kitchener, his staff, and all that ship's company, calm, unflinching, stood waiting for the final plunge.

* * * * *

So died Lord Kitchener of Khartum.

The reputations of many great men suffer a phase of diminution after they have gone. If such is to be Kitchener's fate the knowledge of it would not have disturbed him. Those who knew him will say that had he lived he would have answered not one word to the detractions of self-glorifying soldiers and politicians. Time and Posterity render unto Cæsar those things which are Cæsar's and for their verdict he would have been content to wait.

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